The Pool

I know a forest and in that forest
I know a hidden pool:
In the denseness of the wood, isolated from the world,
In the shades of a lofty oak, blessed by light and accustomed to storm,
Alone she dreams dreams of an inverted world
And spawns, secretly, her golden fish —
But no one knows what is in her heart.

In the morning
When the sun washes the locks of the forest's majesty
And pours a sea of radiance over his curls;
He, the mighty one, all of him an expanse of golden nets,
Stands willingly captive, like Samson in Delilah's hands,
With a faint smile and a lover's illumined face, aware of his strength.
In the golden mesh of himself, he accepts his bonds affectionately,
Lifts high his garlanded head beneath the powers of the sun,
As if to say: flood me, curl me, or bind me,
Do with me whatever your heart desires.
At this hour the pool, granted or not granted
A single golden ray from above —
Grows languid in the shade of her many-branched shield,
Quietly she nurses his roots and her waters grow tranquil;
As if rejoicing silent in her lot,

הַבְּרֵכָה

אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ יַעַר, וּבַיַּעַר
אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ בְּרֵכָה צְנוּעָה אַחַת:
בַּעֲבִי הַחֹרֶשׁ, פְּרוּשָׁה מִן הָעוֹלָם,
בְּצֵל שֶׁל־אַלּוֹן רָם, בְּרוּךְ אוֹר וְלִמּוּד סַעַר,
לְבַדָּהּ תַּחֲלֹם לָהּ חֲלוֹם עוֹלָם הָפוּךְ
וְתַדְגֶּה לָהּ בַּחֲשָׁאי אֶת־דְּגֵי זְהָבָהּ –
וְאֵין יוֹדֵעַ מַה־בִּלְבָבָהּ.

בַּבֹּקֶר,
בִּרְחֹץ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מַחְלְפוֹת גְּאוֹן הַיַּעַר
וְיָם שֶׁל־זֹהַר עַל תַּלְתַּלָּיו תִּשְׁפֹּךְ;
וְהוּא, הָאֵיתָן, מִשְׁטַח חֶרְמֵי זָהָב כֻּלּוֹ,
לִרְצוֹנוֹ, כְּשִׁמְשׁוֹן בִּידֵי דְלִילָה, עוֹמֵד נִלְכָּד,
מִתּוֹךְ שְׂחוֹק קַל וְאוֹר פְּנֵי אוֹהֵב מַרְגִּישׁ כֹּחוֹ,
בְּרֶשֶׁת פָּז שֶׁל־עַצְמוֹ, מְקַבֵּל אֲסוּרָיו בְּחִבָּה,
וּמֵרִים עָל רֹאשׁ נִזְרוֹ תַּחַת גְּבוּרוֹת שֶׁמֶשׁ,
כְּאוֹמֵר לָהּ: שְׁטְפִינִי, סַלְסְלִינִי אוֹ אִסְרִינִי
וַעֲשִׂי בִי מַה־שֶּׁלִּבֵּךְ חָפֵץ –
הַבְּרֵכָה בְּשָׁעָה זוֹ, אִם תִּזְכֶּה וְאִם לֹא־תִזְכֶּה
בְּקֶרֶן אַחַת זָהָב מִגָּבְהַּ –
תִּתְעַלֶּף־לָהּ בְּצֵל מָגִנָּהּ רַב הַפֹּארוֹת,
מֵינִיקָה חֶרֶשׁ אֶת־שָׁרָשָׁיו וּמֵימֶיהָ יִשְׁלוּ;
כְּאִלּוּ שְׂמֵחָה הִיא בְּחֶלְקָהּ דּוֹמֶם

Privileged to be a mirror for the forest's mighty one.
And who knows, perhaps she dreams in secret
That not his image or his roots alone within her lie —
But that all of him grows within her.

On a moonlit night —
When a heavy mystery lies over the wood,
And hidden quiet light filters through its branches,
Stealing, passing over its trunks,
Embroidering there in silver and blue
Embroideries of its wonders —
Hushed is every thicket, hushed is every tree!
Each one darkens himself with his crown
And meditates there secretly the meditation of his heart.
The wood stands full of schemes, completely burdened with
Mystery, regal, glorious, singular, much honored and ancient
As if there, deep within the secret core of his might,
On a golden couch, hidden from living eyes, sleeps
In her very innocence, perfect majesty and eternal youth,
A princess from ancient times who was bewitched.
And the wood was charged to count her nostrils' breath
And guard in secret, watch the mystery of her virginity
Until the prince, her lover and redeemer, comes and sets her free —
At this hour the pond, granted or not granted

שֶׁזָּכְתָה לִהְיוֹת רְאִי לַחֲסִין הַיָּעַר.
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ, אוּלַי חוֹלְמָה הִיא בַּסֵּתֶר,
כִּי־לֹא רַק־צַלְמוֹ עִם יוֹנַקְתּוֹ בָּהּ –
אַךְ כֻּלּוֹ גָּדֵל הוּא בְּתוֹכָהּ.

וּבְלֵיל יָרֵחַ –
בִּרְבֹץ תַּעֲלוּמָה כְּבֵדָה עַל הַחֹרֶשׁ,
וְאוֹר גָּנוּז חֲרִישִׁי זוֹלֵף בֵּין עֳפָאָיו
הִתְגַּנֵּב וַעֲבֹר עַל־גְּזָעָיו,
וְרוֹקֵם שָׁם בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַתְּכֵלֶת
אֶת־רִקְמוֹת פְּלָאָיו –
וְהַס כָּל־סְבָךְ, וְהַס כָּל־אִילָן!
כָּל־אֶחָד מַאֲפִיל עַל־עַצְמוֹ בְּצַמַּרְתּוֹ
וּמְהַרְהֵר לוֹ בִּצְנְעָה הִרְהוּר לִבּוֹ.
וְעוֹמֵד לוֹ הַחֹרֶשׁ רַב מְזִמָּה, כֻּלּוֹ טָעוּן
סוֹד מַלְכוּת נֶאְדָּר אֶחָד, גְּדָל־יְקָר וְקַדְמוֹן,
כְּאִלּוּ שָׁם לִפְנַי וְלִפְנִים, בְּחֶבְיוֹן עֻזּוֹ,
עַל־עֶרֶשׂ פָּז, מֵעֵין כָּל־חַי מֻצְנַעַת, תִּישַׁן,
בְּעֶצֶם תֻּמָּהּ, כְּלִילַת הוֹד וַעֲלוּמֵי נֶצַח,
בַּת־מַלְכָּה מִנֵּי־קֶדֶם שֶׁנִּתְכַּשְּׁפָה,
וְהוּא, הַחֹרֶשׁ, הָפְקַד לִמְנוֹת נְשָׁמוֹת אַפָּהּ
וּשְׁמוֹר מִשְׁמֶרֶת קֹדֶשׁ סוֹד בְּתוּלֶיהָ
עַד־יָבֹא בֶּן־הַמֶּלֶךְ, דּוֹדָהּ גּוֹאֲלָהּ, וּגְאָלָהּ –
הַבְּרֵכָה בְּשָׁעָה זוֹ, אִם־תִּזְכֶּה וְאִם לֹא־תִזְכֶּה

A liquid silver ray from on high —
Withdraws into the shadow of her many-branched shield,
Grows doubly silent,
As if the silence of the wood and the glory of its mystery
Were doubled there in the mirror of her slumbering waters.
Who knows, perhaps secretly she dreams
That the prince is roaming, wandering in vain,
Searching in primordial forests, in sandy wastes, and in the beds of seas
For the lost princess —
This hidden delight, this great radiance,
Is she not secreted here within her depths —
In the heart of the slumbering pond.

And on a day of storm
In the forest, overhead, already congregates a coven of clouds
And battle is in their hearts,
While still controlling, repressing their anger a moment,
With essential thunder their belly rages,
Cloud to cloud, like a herald of approaching evil
Sends flashes of lightning in haste:
"Prepare!"
And yet before the enemy is known,
Or from where the enemy will come —
The forest all in gloom stands prepared
For disaster in the world.

בְּקֶרֶן כֶּסֶף קְלוּשָׁה מִגָּבֹהַּ –
תִּתְכַּנֵּס־לָהּ בְּצֵל מָגִנָּהּ רַב הַפֹּארוֹת,
וּמִשְׁנֶה דְּמָמָה תִּדֹּם,
כְּאִלּוּ דְּמִי הַחֹרֶשׁ וְהַדְרַת סוֹדוֹ
נִכְפָּלִים שָׁם בִּרְאִי מֵימֶיהָ הַנִּרְדָּמִים.
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ, אוּלַי תַּחֲלֹם בַּמִּסְתָּרִים,
כִּי אַךְ לַשָּׁוְא יְשׁוֹטֵט, יָתַע בֶּן־הַמֶּלֶךְ
וִיחַפֵּשׂ בְּיַעְרוֹת עַד, בְּצִיּוֹת חוֹל וּבְקַרְקַע יַמִּים
אֶת־בַּת הַמַּלְכָּה הָאֹבֶדֶת –
וְחֶמְדָּה גְּנוּזָה זוֹ בְּזָהֳרָהּ הַגָּדוֹל
הֲלֹא הִיא כְּמוּסָה פֹּה עִמָּהּ בְּמַעֲמַקֶּיהָ –
בְּלֵב הַבְּרֵכָה הַנִּרְדָּמֶת.

וּבְיוֹם הַסְּעָרָה –
עַל־רֹאשׁ הַיַּעַר נִצְבְּרָה כְּבָר חַשְׁרַת עָבִים
וּקְרָב בִּלְבָבָם,
אַךְ עוֹד מִתְאַפְּקִים הֵם וְכוֹבְשִׁים זַעְמָם רֶגַע
וּבְסֵתֶר רַעַם תִּרְגַּז בִּטְנָם,
וְעָב אֶל־עָב, כִּמְבַשֵּׂר רָעָה קְרוֹבָה,
שׁוֹלֵחַ רִמְזֵי בְּרָקִים בְּחִפָּזוֹן:
„הִכּוֹנָה!”
וּבְטֶרֶם נוֹדַע מִי הָאוֹיֵב
וְאֵי מִזֶּה הָאוֹיֵב יָבֹא –
הַיַּעַר כֻּלּוֹ קוֹדֵר עוֹמֵד מוּכָן
לְכָל־פֻּרְעָנוּת שֶׁבָּעוֹלָם.

Suddenly — Spark! Lightning! The forest pales,
The world glows,
Crash Crash! Thunder explodes, the forest quakes
And seethes!
Sixty myriad blasts of wind
Seeing and yet unseen,
With wild shrieks swarms over its mighty ones,
Grasps them suddenly by their crown
Jerks them violently, beating their heads —
Thunder upon thunder!
From the midst of the storm comes the roar of the forest multitude.
Wide tumult, fierce clamor
Like the noise of distant breakers heavy with water,

And all says uproar, uproar, uproar —
In this hour's commotion, the pond,
Surrounded by a wall of forest lords,
Still hides deep down in her depth the golden fish,
And like a panicked infant on a terrored night, hides,
Shuts tight his eyes under his mother's wings
And blinks his eyes at every flash of sparkling light —
So with contorted face, black waters glum,
She withdraws into the shade of her many-branched shield
All of her shuddering, shuddering...
And who knows,

וּפִתְאֹם – זִיק! בְּרַק־נוּר! הַיַּעַר חָוַר,
הָעוֹלָם הִבְהֵב,
הַךְ־הָךְ! הִתְפּוֹצֵץ רַעַם, זָע הַיַּעַר –
וַיִּרְתָּח!
וְשִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא פְּרִיצֵי רוּחוֹת
הָרֹאִים וְאֵינָם נִרְאִים,
בִּשְׁרִיקוֹת פְּרָאִים פָּשְׁטוּ עַל אַדִּירָיו
וַיֹּאחֲזוּם פִּתְאֹם בִּבְלֹרִיתָם,
וַיְטַלְטְלוּם טַלְטֵלָה, הָלְמוּ רֹאשָׁם –
וְרַעַם אַחֲרֵי רָעַם!
וּבָא מִתּוֹךְ הַסְּעָרָה קוֹל הֲמוֹן הַיַּעַר,
רְחַב הֲמוּלָּה, כְּבֵד תְּשׁוּאוֹת,
כִּשְׁאוֹן מִשְׁבָּרִים רְחוֹקִים כִּבְדֵי מָיִם,

וְכֻלּוֹ אוֹמֵר רַעַשׁ, רַעַשׁ, רָעַשׁ...
בִּשְׁעַת מְהוּמָה זוֹ – הַבְּרֵכָה,
מֻקֶּפֶת חוֹמָה שֶׁל־אַבִּירֵי חֹרֶשׁ,
עוֹד תַּעֲמִיק לַסְתִּיר בִּמְצוּלָתָהּ דְּגֵי זְהָבָהּ,
וּכְתִינוֹק נִבְעָת נֶחְבָּא בְּלֵיל זְוָעָה
עֲצוּם עֵינַיִם תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי אִמּוֹ
וּלְכָל־בְּרַק נוּר מְנַצְנֵץ יָנִיד עַפְעָף –
כֵּן נַעֲוַת פָּנִים, שְׁחֹרַת מַיִם וּקְדֹרַנִּית,
תִּתְכַּנֵּס־לָהּ בְּצֵל מָגִנָּהּ רַב הַפֹּארוֹת –
וְכֻלָּהּ רַעַד, רָעַד...
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ,

Does she tremble for the glory mantle of the forest's pride,
For the summits of his split crowns,
Or does she grieve for all the beauty of her hidden world,
Bright dreamed, clear imaged
That a sudden wind passed over and muddied,
Multitude of splendid visions, her heart's darlings,
Musings by day, musings by night
That a spiteful moment turned to wrath.

At dawn —
The forest is quiet yet, sullen and trembling still,
The last shadows contract into their hiding place;
Warm, milky mists, creepers of dust
Begin to offer incense to the wood, wander up,
Hang scrap by scrap upon its crowns.
Tongues of breezes, sweet and cool
Like tongues of a soft infant mouth upon its mother's cheek,
Already have set out in darkness to appease the forest
For the night's chill and wrath.
They search soft genial light in the leaves,
Sailing from branch to branch, from tree to tree
Licking the whitish milky mists,
Or falling into a nest, unwittingly ruffle
The feathers of a soft sleeping bird —
And there above the forest heights rest

הַחֲרֵדָה הִיא לִגְאוֹן אַדֶּרֶת יַעַר
וּלְתוֹעֲפוֹת צַמְּרוֹתָיו הַמְבֻלָּקוֹת,
אוֹ צַר לָהּ עַל־יְפִי עוֹלָמָהּ הַצָּנוּעַ,
בְּהִיר הַחֲלוֹמוֹת, זַךְ הַמַּרְאוֹת,
אֲשֶׁר עֲבָרוֹ רוּחַ פִּתְאֹם וַיַּעְכְּרֵנוּ,
וַהֲמוֹן חֶזְיוֹנוֹת הוֹד, טִפּוּחֵי לִבָּהּ,
הִרְהוּרֵי יוֹם וְהִרְהוּרֵי לַיְלָה,
בְּרֶגַע זַעַם אֶחָד שָׂם לְקִצְפָּה.

בַּשַּׁחַר –
הַיַּעַר מַחֲרִישׁ עוֹד, עוֹד זוֹעֲפִים וַחֲרֵדִים
מִצְטַמְצְמִים אַחֲרוֹנֵי צְלָלָיו בַּמַּחֲבוֹאִים;
אַךְ אֵדֵי חָלָב חַמִּים, זוֹחֲלֵי עָפָר,
הֵחֵלּוּ כְּבָר מְקַטְּרִים לוֹ, וְהִנָּם תּוֹעִים
וְנִתְלִים קְרָעִים קְרָעִים עַל־צַמְּרוֹתָיו.
וּלְשׁוֹנוֹת רוּחַ קְטַנּוֹת, מְתוּקוֹת, פּוֹשְׁרוֹת,
כִּלְשׁוֹן פִּי־תִינוֹק רַךְ עַל לְחָיֵי אִמּוֹ,
כְּבָר יָצְאוּ בַּעֲלָטָה לְפַיֵּס אֶת־הַיַּעַר
מִצִּנַּת לַיְלָה וּמִזַּעְפּוֹ.
וּבוֹלְשׁוֹת הֵן רַכְרַכּוֹת, קַלּוֹת, נוֹחוֹת, בֵּין־הֶעָלִים
מְשׁוֹטְטוֹת מִסְּבָךְ לִסְבָךְ, מֵעֵץ לַחֲבֵרוֹ,
מְלַקְקוֹת אֶת־חֲלֵב הָאֵדִים הַלְּבָנוֹנִים
אוֹ נוֹפְלוֹת אֶל פִּי קֵן וּמְזַעְזְעוֹת שָׁם שֶׁלֹּא מִדַּעַת
נוֹצָתוֹ שֶׁל אֶפְרוֹחַ רַךְ וְיָשֵׁן – –
וְשָׁם עַל־מְרוֹמֵי יַעַר עָמְדָה לָפוּשׁ

The celestial court — a cumulus of clouds.
They are the clouds of glory, of dawn,
Whose form is like a host of ancient lords, celestial elders,
Carrying hidden scrolls, regal wrath, within their hands
From one world to another.
Then stood the forest silent and quaked,
Choking down in awe with bated breath
Each blink, each light chirp of a wakening bird,
All says tremor, reverence, honor —
And at this hour the slumbering pond
Envelops herself, serene, warm, smooth
In a light white sheet, a pallid mist,
And naps the sleep of dawn —
And who knows if now she does not dream
That in vain the august of the sky, the princes of the heights,
Wander far to seek another world,
At the ends of the sea, in the edges of the upper heaven —
And this other world is so near, so near —
For is it not here below, here below
In the heart of the hidden pool.

And I in my youth, my days' delight,
When first rustled over me the wings of the Presence*
And my heart still knew how to long and yearn and wonder silently
Seeking a hiding place for its prayers,

פַּמַּלְיָא שֶׁל־מַעְלָה – שִׁפְעַת עָבִים,
הֲלֹא הֵם עַנְנֵי הַכָּבוֹד, עָבֵי שַׁחַר,
שֶׁדְּמוּת לָהֶם כַּעֲדַת אַלּוּפֵי קֶדֶם, זִקְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן,
הַנּוֹשְׂאִים מְגִלּוֹת סְתָרִים, זַעַם מֶלֶךְ, בְּיָדָם
מֵעוֹלָם אַחֵר לְעוֹלָם אַחֵר.
וְעָמַד אָז הַיַּעַר זָע וּמַחֲרִישׁ,
מְחַנֵּק בַּחֲרָדָה וּבִנְשִׁימָה כְבוּשָׁה
כָּל־נִיד, כָּל צִפְצוּף קַל שֶׁל־צִפּוֹר מִתְעוֹרֶרֶת,
וְכֻלּוֹ אוֹמֵר רֶתֶת וְיִרְאַת כָּבוֹד – – –
בְּשָׁעָה זוֹ הַבְּרֵכָה הַנִּרְדֶּמֶת
תִּתְעַטֶּף־לָהּ, שַׁאֲנַנָּה, חַמָּה, חֲלָקָה
בְּסָדִין קַל וְלָבָן – אֵד חִוַּרְוַר,
וּתְנוּמַת שַׁחַר תָּנֹם –
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ, אִם לֹא־תַחֲלֹם עַתָּה,
כִּי אַךְ לַשָּׁוְא נִכְבַּדֵּי שַׁחַק, נְשִׂיאֵי מָרוֹם,
יַרְחִיקוּ נְדוֹד לְבַקֵּשׁ עוֹלָם אַחֵר
בְּעֶבְרֵי יָם וּבְקַצְוֵי שְׁמֵי שָׁמַיִם –
וְעוֹלָם אַחֵר זֶה כֹּה־קָרוֹב הוּא, כֹּה־קָרוֹב –
הֲרֵי הוּא כָּאן מִלְּמַטָּה, כָּאן מִלְּמַטָּה
בְּלֵב הַבְּרֵכָה הַמִּצְנָעַת.

וַאֲנִי בִּימֵי נְעוּרַי, חֶמְדַּת יָמַי, –
אַךְ־רִפְרְפָה עָלַי רִאשׁוֹנָה כְּנַף הַשְּׁכִינָה,
וּלְבָבִי יָדַע עוֹד עֲרוֹג וּכְלוֹת וּתְמֹהַּ דּוּמָם
וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מַחֲבֵא לִתְפִלָּתוֹ,

I used to journey at the heat of a summer's day
To the kingdom of magnificent tranquillity —
To the forest's dense thickets.
There between God's trees which had not heard the ax's echo,
On a path known only to the wolf and mighty hunter,
I used to wander whole hours by myself,
Uniting with my heart and with my God until I came,
Stepping over, passing between golden snares,
To the Holy of Holies in the forest — the pupil of its eye.

Within a hanging of leaves
There is a small green island carpeted with grass,
A solitary island, like a small world in itself,
A tranquil, holy sanctuary, hidden between the shade trees
(Forest ancients, broad foliaged, heavy crowned):
Its ceiling — a small blue dome
Suspended over and actually imposed upon the trees;
Its floor glass: a pool with clear water,
A silver mirror framed in moist grass;
Within it was another world, a second world,
And in the center of the dome as in the center of the pool,
Facing each other, two agate gems were fixed,
Agates large and shining —
Two Suns.

הָיִיתִי מַפְלִיג לִי כְּחֹם יוֹם קַיִץ
אֶל־מַמְלְכוּת הַשַּׁלְוָה הַנֶּאְדָּרָה –
לַעֲבִי הַיָּעַר.
וְשָׁם, בֵּין עֲצֵי־אֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ בַּת קוֹל קַרְדֹּם,
בִּשְׁבִיל יָדְעוּ רַק הַזְּאֵב וְגִבּוֹר צַיִד,
הָיִיתִי תוֹעֶה לִי לְבַדִּי שָׁעוֹת שְׁלֵמוֹת,
מִתְיַחֵד עִם לְבָבִי וֵאלֹהַי עַד־בֹּאִי,
פָּסוֹחַ וַעֲבוֹר בֵּין מוֹקְשֵׁי זָהָב,
אֶל־קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים שֶׁבַּיַּעַר – אֶל־בַּת עֵינוֹ:

מִבַּיִת לַפָּרֹכֶת שֶׁל הֶעָלִים,
שָׁם יֵשׁ אִי קָטֹן יָרֹק, רְפוּד דֶּשֶׁא,
אִי בּוֹדֵד לוֹ, כְּעֵין עוֹלָם קָטֹן בִּפְנֵי עַצְמוֹ,
דְּבִיר קֹדֶשׁ שַׁאֲנָן, מֻצְנָע בֵּין צְאֱלִים
שֶׁל־זִקְנֵי יַעַר רַחֲבֵי נוֹף וּמְסֻרְבְּלֵי צָמֶר:
תִּקְרָתוֹ – כִּפַּת תְּכֵלֶת קְטַנָּה,
הַכְּפוּיָה וּמֻנַּחַת עַל הָעֵצִים מַמָּשׁ,
רִצְפָּתוֹ – זְכוּכִית: בְּרֵכַת מַיִם זַכִּים,
רְאִי כֶסֶף בְּתוֹךְ מִסְגֶּרֶת דֶּשֶׁא רָטֹב,
וּבוֹ עוֹד עוֹלָם קָטֹן, עוֹלָם שֵׁנִי,
וּבְאֶמְצַע כִּפָּה זוֹ וּבְאֶמְצַע אוֹתָהּ בְּרֵכָה,
זוֹ נֶגֶד זוֹ, שְׁתֵּי אַבְנֵי כַדְכֹּד קְבוּעוֹת,
כַּדְכֳּדִים גְּדוֹלִים וּמַבְהִיקִים –
שְׁנֵי שְׁמָשׁוֹת.

And as I sat there at the pond's shore, visioning
The riddle of the two worlds, twin worlds,
Not knowing which of them comes first,
Bending my head under the blessing of the ancients of the wood
Dripping shadow and light, resin and song —
I clearly felt a silent flowing
A kind of new and fresh abundance to my soul;
My heart, thirsting for the great, holy mystery,
Continued to fill with silent hope,
As if demanding more and more, and yearning for
Revelation of the near Presence or of Elijah,*
And as my ear still strains and hopes,
And in its sacred desires my heart trembles, pines, expires —
The voice of the Withdrawing God
Bursts suddenly out of the stillness,
"Where are you!?"
And all the pleasant places of the forest fill with amazement,
The tall firs, supple dwellers,
Look at me with great majesty, wondering silently
As if to say: "What is he doing among us?"

There exists a silent immanent language, a secret tongue,
It has no sound, syllable, only shades of hues:
Enchantments, splendid pictures, hosts of visions.
In this tongue God makes himself known to those his spirit chooses,

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וּבְשִׁבְתִּי שָׁם עַל־שְׂפַת הַבְּרֵכָה, צוֹפֶה
בְּחִידַת שְׁנֵי עוֹלָמוֹת, עוֹלָם תְּאוֹמִים,
מִבְּלִי לָדַעַת מִי מִשְּׁנֵיהֶם קוֹדֵם,
וּמַטֶּה רֹאשִׁי תַּחַת בִּרְכַּת שָׂבֵי חֹרֶשׁ
מַרְעִיפֵי צֵל וָאוֹר וְשִׁיר וּשְׂרָף כְּאֶחָד –
הָיִיתִי מַרְגִּישׁ בַּעֲלִיל בְּנֶבַע חֶרֶשׁ
כְּעֵין שֶׁפַע רַעֲנָן חָדָשׁ אֶל נִשְׁמָתִי,
וּלְבָבִי, צְמֵא תַעֲלוּמָה רַבָּה, קְדוֹשָׁה,
אָז הוֹלֵךְ וּמִתְמַלֵּא דְמִי תוֹחֶלֶת,
כְּאִלּוּ הוּא תוֹבֵעַ עוֹד וָעוֹד, וּמְצַפֶּה
לְגִלּוּי שְׁכִינָה קְרוֹבָה אוֹ לְגִלּוּי אֵלִיָּהוּ.
וּבְעוֹד קַשּׁוּבָה אָזְנִי וּמְיַחֶלֶת,
וּבְמַאֲוַיֵּי קָדְשׁוֹ לִבִּי יָחִיל, יִכְלֶה, יִגְוַע –
וּבַת קוֹל אֵל מִסְתַּתֵּר
תִּתְפּוֹצֵץ פִּתְאֹם מִן הַדְּמָמָה:
"אַיֶּכָּה!?"
וּמָלְאוּ נְאוֹת הַיַּעַר תְּמִיהָה גְדוֹלָה,
וּבְרוֹשֵׁי אֵל, אֶזְרָחִים רַעֲנַנִּים,
יִסְתַּכְּלוּ בִּי בְּגַדְלוּת הוֹד, מִשְׁתָּאִים דּוֹמָם,
כְּאוֹמְרִים: „מַה־לָּזֶה בֵּינֵינוּ?"

שְׂפַת אֵלִים חֲרִישִׁית יֵשׁ, לְשׁוֹן חֲשָׁאִים,
לֹא־קוֹל וְלֹא הֲבָרָה לָהּ אַךְ גַּוְנֵי גְוָנִים;
וּקְסָמִים לָהּ וּתְמוּנוֹת הוֹד וּצְבָא חֶזְיוֹנוֹת,
בְּלָשׁוֹן זוֹ יִתְוַדַּע אֵל לִבְחִירֵי רוּחוֹ,

In it the Royal Emissary of the world reflects upon his thoughts,
The Artist Creator embodies the thought of his heart
And in it finds the solution of the unexpressed dream.
It is the language of images revealed
In a strip of blue sky and in its expanse,
In the purity of small silver clouds and in their dark mass,
In the tremor of golden wheat, in the pride of mighty cedars,
In the rustle of a dove's pure wing
And in the eaglewing's sweep,
In the beauty of a man's body, in the aura of a glance,
In the sea's wrath, in the wave's caprice and play,
In the overflowing night, in the silence of falling stars,
In the roar of light, in the rumble of sea flaming
With sunrises and sunsets.
In this language, tongue of tongues, also the pool
Formed for me her eternal riddle.
Hidden there in the shade, bright, serene, silent,
She looks at everything and all is envisioned in her, and with all
she changes.
It seemed to me she was the open pupil, the eye
Of the forest Royal Emissary, great in mysteries
And in patient, profound meditations.

וּבָהּ יְהַרְהֵר שַׂר הָעוֹלָם אֶת־הִרְהוּרָיו,
וְיוֹצֵר אָמָּן יְגַלֵּם בָּהּ הֲגִיג לְבָבוֹ
וּמָצָא פִּתְרוֹן בָּהּ לַחֲלוֹם לֹא־הָגוּי;
הֲלֹא הִיא לְשׁוֹן הַמַּרְאוֹת, שֶׁמִּתְגַּלָּה
בְּפַס רְקִיעַ תְּכֵלֶת וּבְמֶרְחַבָּיו,
בְּזֹךְ עֲבִיבֵי כֶסֶף וּבִשְׁחוֹר גָּלְמֵיהֶם,
בְּרֶטֶט קָמַת פָּז וּבְגֵאוּת אֶרֶז אַדִּיר,
בְּרִפְרוּף כָּנָף צְחוֹרָה שֶׁל הַיּוֹנָה
וּבְמֶטּוֹת כַּנְפֵי נֶשֶׁר,
בִּיפִי גֵו אִישׁ וּבְזֹהַר מַבַּט עָיִן,
בְּזַעַף יָם, בִּמְשׁוּבַת גַּלָּיו וּבִשְׂחוֹקָם,
בְּשִׁפְעַת לֵיל, בִּדְמִי כּוֹכָבִים נוֹפְלִים
וּבְרַעַשׁ אוֹרִים, נַהֲמַת יָם שַׁלְהָבוֹת
שֶׁל־זְרִיחוֹת שֶׁמֶשׁ וּשְׁקִיעוֹתָיו –
בְּלָשׁוֹן זוֹ, לְשׁוֹן הַלְּשׁוֹנוֹת, גַּם הַבְּרֵכָה
לִי חָדָה אֶת־חִידָתָהּ הָעוֹלָמִית.
וַחֲבוּיָה שָׁם בַּצֵּל, בְּהִירָה, שְׁלֵוָה, מַחֲשָׁה,
בַּכֹּל צוֹפִיָּה וְהַכֹּל צָפוּי בָּהּ, וְעִם־הַכֹּל מִשְׁתַּנָּה,
לִי נִדְמְתָה כְּאִלּוּ הִיא בַּת־עַיִן פְּקוּחָה
שֶׁל־שַׂר הַיַּעַר גְּדָל־הָרָזִים
וְאֶרֶךְ הַשַּׂרְעַפּוֹת.

At Day's End

Through clouds of fire and clouds of blood
The sun sinks down to the ocean's edge.

The rays of light through clouds appear,
A vast array of burnished spears.

It waters the plain with lucid gleam
And sets afire the thicket's green.

It pours a light on the head of the wood
And blazes a fire in the river's flood.

It covers the top of the hill with gold,
Sprinkles, sprays the grain with a glow.

The wing of the day it bends to kiss
And goes down alive into the abyss —

Then all existence comes to shade,
The night comes as the night strides.

A light wind comes, blows, flees,
It kissed me and told me mysteries.

בַּעֲרֹב הַיּוֹם

בֵּין עָבֵי אֵשׁ וְעָבֵי דָם
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ רַד לִפְאַת הַיָּם,

וְקַרְנֵי אוֹר בְּעַד הָעָב,
כַּחֲנִיתוֹת מְמֹרָטוֹת רָב.

וַיַּשְׁקְ הַכִּכָּר נֹגַהּ זָךְ,
וַיַּצֶּת־אֵשׁ בְּיֶרֶק הַסְּבָךְ.

עַל־רֹאשׁ הַחֹרֶשׁ יָצַק אוֹר,
וַיַּתֶּךְ־אֵשׁ בְּמֵי־הַיְאֹר.

וַיְצַף אֶת־רֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה פָּז,
בַּקָּמָה זָרַק זִיו וַיִּז.

וַיֵּט, וַיִּשַּׁק כְּנַף הַיּוֹם,
וַיֵּרֶד חַי אֶל־פִּי הַתְּהוֹם – – –

אָז יָבֹא כָל־הַיְקוּם בַּצֵּל,
הַלַּיִל הֹלֵךְ – בָּא הַלֵּיל.

וְרוּחַ קַל בָּא, נָשַׁב, נָס,
וַיִּשַּׁק לִי וַיְגַל לִי רָז.

To me it whispered: innocence, faith —
Like rays of light at end of day.

The days of youth, good child,
Quickly fly like birds in flight.

Here everything turns to dirt and dross —
There is a good, a festive world for us.

A lighted corner, a blessed space,
Its spirit — freedom, its sun — grace.

A place for us there I explored
Rise, let's fly together, my son, soar:

This is not peace, fly, go —
But why, my heart, do you pain so?

Who cast the shadow in your room,
God's darkness, eternal gloom?

Why do you glower, turn to —
There is God's expanse — narrow for you.

Are you afraid to watch the night's
Darkness prevail against the light?

הוּא לָאַט עִמִּי: אֹמֶן, תֹּם –
כְּקֶרֶן אוֹר בַּעֲרֹב הַיּוֹם.

וִימֵי הַנֹּעַר, יֶלֶד טוֹב,
יָעוּפוּ חִישׁ כִּמְעוּף הָעוֹף.

פֹּה נֶאֱלַח הַכֹּל, הַכֹּל סָג –
יֶשׁ־עוֹלָם טוֹב שֶׁכֻּלּוֹ חָג.

יֶשׁ־קֶרֶן בְּרוּכָה, פִּנַּת־אוֹר,
שֶׁשִּׁמְשָׁהּ – צְדָקָה, רוּחָהּ – דְּרוֹר;

שָׁם תַּרְתִּי מָקוֹם לְךָ וָלִי –
קוּם נָעוּף יַחְדָּו, נִדְאֶה, בְּנִי!

לֹא זֹה הַמְּנוּחָה, עוּף מִפֹּה –
אַךְ לָמָּה, לִבִּי, תִּדְוֶה כֹּה?

מִי הֵטִיל בַּחֲדָרֶיךָ צֵל,
אֲפֵלַת עַד וְחֶשְׁכַת־אֵל?

מַדּוּעַ אַתָּה זָעֵף, סָר –
יֵשׁ מֶרְחַב יָהּ – וּלְךָ הוּא צָר.

הֲלִרְאוֹת יֵרַע לְךָ בִּגְבֹר
אִישׁוֹן הַחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־הָאוֹר?

What is the pain, what is the dream
As day expires, which slowly come

And draw the heart, the innocent,
Beyond the seas to the infinite?

And If the Angel Should Ask

— My son, where is your soul? —

"Soar through the world, seek it my angel:
There is in the world a peaceful village surrounded by forest wall
This village has a blue sky, a boundless sky
In the middle of the blue sky an only daughter:
A single cloud, white and small.
On a summer's noon a child played there alone,
A child left to himself, fragile, unique and dreaming —
I am that child, my angel.
Once the whole world swooned and was still,
The two eyes of the child were drawn skyward.
They saw the only one, the pure, the clear.
As he saw her his soul went out as a dove from the cote
Toward the cloud, the delight."

— And it melted? —

כִּי מָה הַכְּאֵב וּמָה הַחֲלוֹם,
הַבָּאִים אַט עִם־צֵאת הַיּוֹם,

וּמשְׁכִים אֶת־הַלֵּב הַתָּם
אֶל־קַצְוֵי עַד, אֶל־אַחֲרִית יָם?

וְאִם־יִשְׁאַל הַמַּלְאָךְ

בְּנִי, נִשְׁמָתְךָ אַיֶּהָ? –

„שׁוּט בָּעוֹלָם, בַּקְּשֶׁנָּה, מַלְאָכִי!
יֵשׁ בָּעוֹלָם כְּפַר שַׁאֲנָן, מֻקַּף חוֹמַת יְעָרִים,
וְלַכְּפָר רְקִיעַ תְּכֵלֶת, בְּלִי מְצָרִים רָקִיעַ,
וְלָרְקִיעַ הַתְּכֵלֶת בַּת־יְחִידָה בְּאֶמְצַע:
עָב יְחִידָה, לְבָנָה וּקְטַנָּה.
וּבְצָהֳרֵי יוֹם קַיִץ בָּדָד שִׂחֶק־שָׁם יֶלֶד,
יֶלֶד עָזוּב לְנַפְשׁוֹ, רַךְ וְיָחִיד וְחוֹלֵם –
וַאֲנִי הוּא הַיֶּלֶד, מַלְאָכִי.
פַּעַם אַחַת הִתְעַלֵּף כָּל־הָעוֹלָם וַיִּשְׁתֹּק,
וּשְׁתֵּי עֵינֵי הַיֶּלֶד הַשָּׁמַיְמָה נִמְשָׁכוּ,
וַיִּרְאֶנָּה, הַיְחִידָה, הַזַּכָּה, הַבְּרוּרָה,
וְנַפְשׁוֹ יָצְאָה בִּרְאוֹתוֹ, כְּצֵאת יוֹנָה מִשּׁוֹבְכָהּ,
אֶל־הָעָב הַנֶּחְמָדָה”.

– וַתִּמּוֹג? –

"There is also a sun in the world, my angel:
A merciful golden ray saved my soul,
And on radiant wings many days it sparkled
Like a white butterfly:
Once at morning it rode astride a golden beam,
Looking for a pearl of dew among the grasses,
And a pure, innocent tear trembled then upon my cheek,
The beam shivered and my soul swooned —
And sunk into the tear."

— And it dried up? —

"No, for it fell upon a page of sacred Gemara.*
My grandfather had a Gemara, rough scrolled pages, crumpled
And in its belly — two of my grandfather's white hairs,
Threads of blemished fringes* of his small prayer shawl*
And marks of many drops of tallow and wax.
In this Gemara, in the belly of dead letters
Alone my soul fluttered."

— And it choked? —

"No, it fluttered and sang, my angel!
Out of the dead letters welled forth songs of life.
In my grandfather's bookcase the eternal dead quaked.

„גַּם־שֶׁמֶשׁ יֵשׁ בָּעוֹלָם, מַלְאָכִי!
אֶת־נִשְׁמָתִי הִצִּילָה קֶרֶן פָּז רַחֲמָנִיָּה,
וְעַל־כַּנְפֵי הַזֹּהַר יָמִים רַבִּים פִּזְּזָה
כְּצִפֹּרֶת לְבָנָה;
פַּעַם רָכְבָה בַּבֹּקֶר עַל־גַּב קֶרֶן הַזָּהָב,
הָלוֹךְ הָלְכָה לְבַקֵּשׁ פְּנִינַת טַל בֵּין הַדְּשָׁאִים,
וְדִמְעָה זַכָּה וְתַמָּה אָז עַל־לֶחְיִי רָעָדָה,
וַתִּזְדַּעֲזַע הַקֶּרֶן וְנִשְׁמָתִי צָנָחָה –
וַתִּשְׁתַּקַּע בַּדִּמְעָה".

– וַתִּיבָשׁ? –

„לֹא, כִּי נָשְׁרָה עַל־דַּף גְּמָרָא קְדוֹשָׁה.
גְּמָרָא הָיְתָה לִזְקֵנִי שְׂעִירַת גִּוִּילִים וּמְעוּכָה,
וּבִכְרֵסָהּ – שְׁתֵּי שְׂעָרוֹת שֶׁל־זְקָנוֹ הַלָּבָן,
חוּטֵי צִיצִיּוֹת פְּסוּלוֹת שֶׁל־טַלִּיתוֹ הַקְּטַנָּה
וְסִמָּנִים שֶׁל־הַרְבֵּה טִפּוֹת חֵלֶב וְשַׁעֲוָה,
וּבַגְּמָרָא הַזֹּאת, בִּמְעֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת מֵתוֹת
בָּדָד פִּרְפְּרָה נִשְׁמָתִי".

– וַתֵּחָנֵק? –

„לֹא, פִּרְפְּרָה וַתְּשׁוֹרֵר, מַלְאָכִי!
בָּאוֹתִיּוֹת הַמֵּתוֹת שִׁירֵי חַיִּים הֵקֵרוּ,
וּבַאֲרוֹן סִפְרֵי זְקֵנִי מֵתֵי עוֹלָם נִזְדַּעְזָעוּ.

Different were these songs: about a small clear cloud,
A golden sunbeam, a shining tear,
About blemished fringes and drops of wax —
But one song it did not know — the song of youth and love.
And it yearned to escape, it moaned and found no solace,
It fainted away, and was squeezed almost to death.
Once I visited my tattered Gemara —
And suddenly from it flew my soul.

And still it flies and soars in the world,
Soars and wanders and finds no solace.
On the dark nights at the beginning of each month
When the world prays over the imperfect moon,
It clings with its wings to the gate of love
Clings, knocks, secretly weeping,
And prays for love."

I Have a Garden

(from the folk song)

I have a garden and I have a well,
Upon my well there hangs a pail:
Every Sabbath comes my dear,
Drinks from my pitcher, water clear.

שׁוֹנִים הָיוּ הַשִּׁירִים: עַל־עָב קְטַנָּה וּבְהִירָה,
עֲלֵי קֶרֶן הַזָּהָב וַעֲלֵי דִמְעָה מַזְהִירָה,
עֲלֵי צִיצִיּוֹת פְּסוּלוֹת וַעֲלֵי טִפּוֹת שֶׁל־שַׁעֲוָה –
אַךְ שִׁיר אֶחָד לֹא יָדְעָה – שִׁיר עֲלוּמִים וְאַהֲבָה.
וַתְּכַל לָצֵאת, וַתֶּהֱמֶה, וְלֹא־מָצְאָה תַּנְחוּמִין,
וַתִּתְעַלֵּף עַד־כְּלוֹתָהּ, וַיְהִי צַר־לָהּ עַד־מָוֶת.
פַּעַם אַחַת פָּקַדְתִּי אֶת־גְּמָרָתִי הַבָּלָה –
וְהִנֵּה פָּרְחָה מִתּוֹכָהּ נִשְׁמָתִי.

וַעֲדַיִן הִיא טָסָה וּמְשׁוֹטֶטֶת בָּעוֹלָם,
מְשׁוֹטֶטֶת וְתוֹעָה וְאֵינָהּ מוֹצֵאת תַּנְחוּמִין;
וּבַלֵּילוֹת הַצְּנוּעִים שֶׁבִּתְחִלַּת כָּל־חֹדֶשׁ,
בְּהִתְפַּלֵּל הָעוֹלָם עֲלֵי פְּגִימַת הַלְּבָנָה,
הִיא מִתְרַפֶּקָה בִּכְנָפָהּ עֲלֵי שַׁעַר הָאַהֲבָה
מִתְרַפֶּקֶת, דּוֹפֶקֶת וּבוֹכִיָּה בַּחֲשַׁאי,
וּמִתְפַּלְּלָה עַל־הָאַהֲבָה".

יֵשׁ לִי גָּן

(משירי עם)

יֵשׁ לִי גָּן וּבְאֵר יֶשׁ־לִי,
וַעֲלֵי בְאֵרִי תָּלוּי דְּלִי;
מִדֵּי שַׁבָּת בָּא מַחֲמַדִּי,
מַיִם זַכִּים יֵשְׁתְּ מִכַּדִּי.

Hush — the whole world slumbers there! ,
Also the apple and the pear;
My mother sleeps, my father naps,
Only my heart and I awake.

And like my heart, awake, the pail
Is dripping gold into the well,
Drips gold and crystal from above:
There comes my love, there comes my love.

Hush — the garden foliage stirred —
My love comes; fluttered the birds?
My love, my love! — hurry my dear,
No one is in the yard but me.

Upon the trough sit slowly down,
Head on shoulder, hand in hand.
I'll spin you riddles: why does
The pitcher to the fountain rush?

And why is it, you tell me,
The pail weeps, weeps silently?
Drips and drip-drops without cease
From eve to eve.

כָּל־הָעוֹלָם יָשֵׁן – הָס!
גַּם תַּפּוּחַ וַאֲגָס;
אִמִּי נָמָה, נִרְדָּם אָבִי,
עֵרִים רַק אֲנִי וּלְבָבִי.

וְהַדְּלִי כִּלְבָבִי עֵר,
נוֹטֵף פָּז אֶל־פִּי הַבְּאֵר,
נוֹטֵף פָּז וְנוֹטֵף בְּדֹלַח:
דּוֹדִי הוֹלֵךְ, דּוֹדִי הוֹלֵךְ.

הַס, בַּגָּן נִזְדַּעְזַע נוֹף –
דּוֹדִי בָא אִם־פִּרְכֵּס עוֹף?
דּוֹדִי, דּוֹדִי! – חוּשׁ מַחְמַדִּי,
אֵין בֶּחָצֵר אִישׁ מִלְּבַדִּי.

עַל־הַשֹּׁקֶת נֵשֵׁב אָט,
רֹאשׁ אֶל־כָּתֵף, יָד אֶל־יָד;
אָחוּד חִידוֹת לָךְ: מַדּוּעַ
רָץ הַכַּד אֶל־הַמַּבּוּעַ?

וּמַדּוּעַ, הַגֶּד־לִי,
יֵבְךְּ בִּדְמָמָה, יֵבְךְּ הַדְּלִי –
טִיף, טִיף, נִים – וְכֹה בְּלִי־הֶרֶף
מִן־הָעֶרֶב עַד הָעֶרֶב.

And where does anguish start
Like a worm into my heart? —
Has my mother really heard,
Your heart away from me has stirred?

Answered my love, to me he said:
My foes against me speak falsehood!
Silly, this time next year we
Shall walk to the bridal canopy!*

A summer day will glimmer then,
Pour gold on our heads again.
From the fences, blessed salute,
The hands of trees loaded with fruit.

Brother and friend, uncle and kin,
A great assembly, candles and men,
And every kind of instrument
Lead us with bride's maids and best man.

Here the bridal canopy shall
Stand between the garden and the well;
And to me the lovely gift:
A small-nailed finger you will lift.

וּמֵאַיִן בָּא הַכְּאֵב
כְּתוֹלַעַת אֶל־הַלֵּב? –
הוֹי, הַאֱמֶת שָׁמְעָה אִמִּי,
כִּי לְבָבְךָ סָר מֵעִמִּי?

עָנָה דוֹדִי וְאָמַר לִי:
שׂוֹנְאַי שֶׁקֶר עָנוּ בִי!
וּבְעוֹד שָׁנָה, כָּעֵת חַיָּה,
אֶל־הַחֻפָּה נֵלֵךְ, פְּתַיָּה!

יוֹם שֶׁל־קַיִץ יַבְהִיק אָז,
עַל רֹאשֵׁנוּ יִיצֹק פָּז,
וִיבָרְכוּנוּ מִן הַגְּדֵרוֹת
כַּפּוֹת עֵצִים טְעוּנֵי פֵרוֹת.

אָח וָרֵעַ, דּוֹד וּשְׁאֵר,
קָהָל גָּדוֹל, אִישׁ וָנֵר,
וּכְלֵי־זֶמֶר כָּל־הַמִּינִים
יוֹלִיכוּנוּ עִם שׁוֹשְׁבִינִים.

וְהַחֻפָּה תַּעֲמֹד כָּאן:
בֵּין הַבְּאֵר וּבֵין הַגָּן;
אַתְּ תּוֹשִׁיטִי לִי שָׁם דֹּרֶן:
אֶצְבַּע קְטַנָּה עִם צִפֹּרֶן.

"Behold, thou art," to you I'll quote,
"Forever unto me betrothed" —
My enemies shall stand and see
And they shall burst with jealousy.

Prophet, Go, Flee!

(Amos VII:12)

"Go, Flee?" — A man like me does not flee!
Walk calmly, my cattle taught me,
My tongue did not learn to say "yes"
And my word shall fall like a heavy ax.

Not my fault — if my strength was spent in vain,
It is your sin and you carry the blame!
No anvil underneath it did my hammer find
Into the tree's rot my ax came.

No matter! I accept my fate:
My tools to my belt I tie,
Day laborer without my wage
I shall return calmly the same way.

וַאֲנִי לָךְ: „הֲרֵי אַתְּ
מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת לִי לָעַד” –
שׂוֹנְאַי יִהְיוּ שָׁם וְרָאוּ,
וּמִקִּנְאָה יִתְפַּקָּעוּ.

„חוֹזֶה, לֵךְ בְּרַח”

(עמוס ז, יב)

„לֵךְ בְּרַח?” – לֹא־יִבְרַח אִישׁ כָּמוֹנִי!
הָלוֹךְ בַּלָּאט לִמְּדַנִי בְקָרִי,
גַּם דַּבֵּר כֵּן לֹא לָמְדָה לְשׁוֹנִי
וּכְקַרְדֹּם כָּבֵד יִפֹּל דְּבָרִי.

וְאִם־כֹּחִי תַּם לָרִיק – לֹא־פִשְׁעִי,
חַטַּאתְכֶם הִיא וּשְׂאוּ הֶעָוֹן!
לֹא־מָצָא תַחְתָּיו סַדָּן פַּטִּישִׁי,
קַרְדֻּמִּי בָּא בְּעֵץ רִקָּבוֹן.

אֵין דָּבָר! אַשְׁלִים עִם־גּוֹרָלִי:
אֶת־כֵּלַי אֶקְשֹׁר לַחֲגוֹרָתִי,
וּשְׂכִיר הַיּוֹם בְּלִי שְׂכַר פָּעֳלִי
אָשׁוּבָה לִי בַּלָּאט כְּשֶׁבָּאתִי.

Back to my cote I return, to its vales
And with sycamores my covenant I make.
And you — you rot and decay
Tomorrow storm shall carry you away.

אֶל־נָוִי אָשׁוּב וְאֶל־עֲמָקָיו
וְאֶכְרֹת בְּרִית עִם שִׁקְמֵי יָעַר.
וְאַתֶּם – אַתֶּם מְסוֹס וְרָקָב
וּמָחָר יִשָּׂא כֻלְּכֶם סָעַר.

To the Sun

(from the sonnet sequence)

> Our fathers who were in this place,
> with their backs to the sanctuary, their faces to the East,
> bowed eastward to the sun.
> *(Succah 5:4)**

I

I have been to my God like the iris and the anemone*
Which has nothing in its world save its pure sun,
And a messenger taps it: "Rise, grow, small bud, open
Your song, festive song, amidst the prickly thorn!"

I sucked meadow-sap. Like wine overcame me
This scent of fertile earth, its clod, clod fine.
Had He no patriarch or priest in the city shrine
That He brought me here, his prophet proclaimed me?

More than resin on silver fir, shall I hold
Your good oil, on the head, shining gold,
And all the scents of pear tree and field I guard

More than dusts of Sheba's traders,* incense and nard?
Serenely I bow to you. In majesty I bow down
Like a gold-stalk of wheat heavy with grain.

לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

(ממחזור הסנטות)

> אבותינו שהיו במקום הזה,
> אחוריהם אל ההיכל ופניהם קדמה,
> ומשתחוים קדמה לשמש.
> (סוכה, פ״ה, מ״ד)

א

הָיִיתִי לֵאלֹהַי כְּיָקִינְטוֹן וְכַאֲדָנִי,
שֶׁאֵין בְּעוֹלָמוֹ לוֹ אַךְ שִׁמְשׁוֹ זֶה הַצַּח,
וּמַלְאָךְ דּוֹפֵק אוֹתוֹ: ״קוּם גְּדַל, בֶּן־צִיץ, וּפְצַח
רִנָּתְךָ, רִנַּת־חַג, בֶּחָרוּל הַנִּשְׁכָּנִי!״.

וָאִינַק רֹטֶב־נִיר. כַּיַּיִן עֲבָרָנִי
זֶה רֵיחַ אַדְמַת־בּוּל עַל רִגְבָּהּ, רֶגֶב רָךְ
הֲמִבְּלִי אֵין לוֹ אָב וְכֹהֵן בְּמִקְדַּשׁ־כְּרַךְ,
כִּי הֱבִיאַנִי לְכָאן וּלְנָבִיא לוֹ שָׂמָנִי?

הֲיֵקַל בְּעֵינַי שְׂרָף עַל גַּבֵּי כֶּסֶף־בְּרוֹשׁ
מִשַּׁמְנְךָ הַטּוֹב, הַמַּזְהִיב עַל הָרֹאשׁ,
וְרֵיחוֹת הָאַגָּס וְהַשָּׂדֶה שֶׁנָּטַרְתִּי

מֵאַבְקוֹת רוֹכְלֵי־שְׁבָא, מִנִּרְדִּי וּמִקְטָרְתִּי?
וָאֶקֹּד לְךָ בַּלָּט. אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה בְּיֹקֶר,
וּכְאַחַת שִׁבֳּלֵי־פָּז בְּקָמָה כִּבְדַת־בָּר.

XIII

Images of a faded world possessed me, I cannot flee!
Images of this people, lovely grew all it touched,
Beauty was its wisdom, and its wisdom was such
It spread beauty over the abyss and the sea.

Winds of the North sea charmed me through the trees
Telling of the frost dressed in its design:
Among sun-idols of On, as I sought him in the shrine,
I imagined this spark that resounds through me.

But it is an eastern spark I cherished from Canaan:
Dan's idols demanded me, tamarisks striking awe.
I worshipped in Ur-Chaldees, Astarte's groves, sculptured stone.

Which road shall I pick, where is the path?
Shall I choose Zeus or pour oil to Yah,
Or the image-kingdom's idol of the generation past?*

XIV

Or the image-kingdom's idol of the past generation
Or a song, a dream of power, we shall ever form.
Man's eye examined and discovered the secret of forms
In gold and in tin, fine atom combinations.

יג

אֱלִילֵי עוֹלָם גָּז תְּפָסוּנִי וְאֵין לִי מָנוֹס!
אֱלִילֵי גוֹי זֶה, יִיף כָּל הַנּוֹגֵעַ בּוֹ,
נוֹי הָיָה לְחָכְמָה לוֹ, וְחָכְמָתוֹ הָיְתָה נוֹי,
וַיִּז מִיָּפְיוֹ לוֹ עַל שְׁאוֹל וְעַל אוֹקְיָנוֹס.

קְסָמוּנִי רוּחוֹת צְפוֹן־הַיָּם מִבֵּין אִילָנוֹת,
מְסַפְּרוֹת מִן הַכְּפוֹר הָעוֹטֶה תַּשְׁבֵּץ שְׁבוֹ;
וּבֵין חַמָּנֵי־אוֹן, וּבְמִקְדָּשׁ תַּרְתִּי בוֹ,
דִּמִּיתִי נִיצוֹץ זֶה, הָאוֹמֵר בִּי הַשָּׁנוֹת,

אַךְ זִיק מִמִּזְרָח הוּא, מִכְּנַעַן אֶנְצְרֶנּוּ;
תְּבָעוּנִי פְּסִילֵי־דָן, אֲשֵׁלִים מְלֵאִים חִיל,
אֲשֵׁרוֹת, גַּלְמֵי צוֹר, בְּאוּר־כַּשְׂדִּים אֶעֶבְדֶנּוּ.

אֵי דֶרֶךְ אֶבְחַר בָּהּ וְאֵיפֹה הוּא הַשְּׁבִיל?
הַאֶמְשַׁח שַׁמְנִי לְיָהּ אוֹ זֵאוּס אֶבְחָרֶנּוּ,
אוֹ פֶּסֶל אַחֲרוֹן־דּוֹר בְּמַמְלֶכֶת־הָאֱלִיל?

יד

אוֹ פֶּסֶל אַחֲרוֹן־דּוֹר בְּמַמְלֶכֶת־הָאֱלִיל,
אוֹ שִׁיר חֲלוֹם־אֱיָל נָקִימָה לְעוֹלָמִים.
וּבָחֲנָה עֵין־אִישׁ וְגִלְּתָה סוֹד־הַגְּלָמִים
צֵרוּפֵי אַטּוֹם דַּק בַּזָּהָב וּבַבְּדִיל.

From the inanimate he turned, stretched a line a path
To the kingdom of trees and to plants without feeling,
To spotted mushroom, and all are one chain of being:
Pond algae, the almond and the elephant calf.

Comprehended was the secret of heat, light, electricity,
The wonder of flowering barley seed, the magnet's mystery,
The pulsing of live nerve, taut without relief,

And they were one, a secret, secret of secrets — life,
Then was this poem sung to him: this is my Sun that warms me,
I have been to my God like the iris and the anemone.

XV

I have been to my God like the iris and the anemone,
Like a gold-stalk of wheat heavy with grain;
He commanded mountain mists, prepared for me heat's rain,
Turquoise, purple, scarlet, light and shadow's symphony.

My wisdom was an era's anguish, each nation's song charmed me,
Voice of spirit wrapped in light, in the strange dark a voice lost.
As I stood among the living and those giving up the ghost;
Was I born too soon, or too late did God form me?

וּמִן הַדּוֹמֵם יָט וּמָתַח קַו וּשְׁבִיל
לְמַמְלְכוֹת הָעֵץ וְהַצּוֹמְחִים הַנֶּעֱלָמִים.
וְשַׁלְשֶׁלֶת אַחַת לוֹ: פִּטְרִיָּה שֶׁבַּכְּתָמִים,
יְרֹקֶת הָאֲגַם, הַלּוּז וּשְׁגַר־הַפִּיל.

וְנִקְלַט סוֹד הַחֹם, הַחַשְׁמַל וְהָאוֹרָה,
מִסְתּוֹרֵי הַמַּגְנִיט, רָז פְּרִיחַת עִנְבַּת־שְׂעוֹרָה,
וַעֲזוּעֵי עֶצֶב עֵר, הַנִּמְתָּח וְאֵין לוֹ פָּנָי,

וְהָיָה לְאֶחָד סוֹד, סוֹד כָּל הַסּוֹדוֹת – חָי.
אָז יוּשַׁר לוֹ הַשִּׁיר: זֶה שִׁמְשִׁי חִמְּמָנִי,
הָיִיתִי לֵאלֹהַי כְּיַקִּינְטוֹן וְכַאֲדָנִי!

טו

הָיִיתִי לֵאלֹהַי כְּיַקִּינְטוֹן וְכַאֲדָנִי
וּכְאַחַת שִׁבֳּלֵי־פָז בַּקָּמָה כִּבְדַת־בָּר;
וַיְמַן לִי גִּשְׁמֵי־חֹם וַיְצַו עַרְפִלֵּי־הָר,
סִמְפוֹנְיוֹת אוֹר וָצֵל, וּכְחָל, וּסְרָק, וְשָׁנִי.

בִּינוֹתַי צַעַר־דּוֹר, שִׁיר גּוֹי וְגוֹי קְסָמָנִי,
קוֹל נֶפֶשׁ עוֹטָה אוֹר, קוֹל תּוֹעָה בְּמַחְשַׁךְ זָר,
בְּעָמְדִי בֵּין הַחַי וּבֵין הַגּוֹסֵס כְּבָר;
הַאִם קִדַּמְתִּי בֹּא אוֹ אֵחַר צוּר בְּרָאָנִי?

In my heart still lies dew that falls on fields of Edom,
On the Summit of Mount Hor, the eastern God's home,
For my heart prays a song to the Sun and Orion.

When the bean sheathed, fruit ripened on the tree,
I cannot flee, by images of a faded world possessed —
Or the image-kingdom's idol of the generation-past?

Levivot*

(an idyl)

I

Truly it was morning, and few to equal it,
And the first of the months of Spring, lovely over the steppes of Ukraine,
Steppes and plains sea-broad — and who was the first,
First of all, to see this fresh morning's delight,
Still washed in dew and the glow of the morning star
That day and hour? — The lark was first
And raised himself on his wings skyward and rained down his melodies.
Waking the swallow in the roof and the sparrows in the thicket's branches.
Second, the sun awoke from her sleep, her face blazing
With shame that she rose late, hurried to her work,
Paint-brushing the buds, putting blue to the young bird's wing,
Curling with sparks a low wave, gilding the scales of the sea,

---

עוֹד בְּלִבִּי לָן הַטַּל, הַיּוֹרֵד עַל שְׂדֵה־אֱדוֹם,
עַל פִּסְגַּת הֹר־הָהָר, מְעוֹנָה אֱלֹהֵי קֶדֶם,
כִּי לִבִּי דוֹבֵב שִׁיר לַחַמָּה וְלַכְּסִיל.

מִשֶּׁיִּתַּרְמֵל פּוֹל וְגָמַל פְּרִי־אִילָנוֹת
אֱלִילֵי עוֹלָם גָּז תְּפָסוּנִי וְאֵין לִי מָנוֹס –
אוֹ פֶּסֶל אַחֲרוֹן דּוֹר בְּמַמְלֶכֶת־הָאֱלִיל?

לְבִיבוֹת

(אידיליה)

1

אָכֵן בֹּקֶר, שֶׁאֵין דֻּגְמָתוֹ רַבִּים, אָז הָיָה
וְרִאשׁוֹן בְּחָדְשֵׁי הָאָבִיב, הַנָּאוֶה עַל שַׁדְמוֹת אוּקְרַיְנָה,
שְׁדֵמוֹת וַעֲרָבוֹת נִרְחָבוֹת כַּיָּם! – וּמִי זֶה הָרִאשׁוֹן,
רִאשׁוֹן לַכֹּל, אֲשֶׁר רָאָה אֶת חֶמְדַּת הַבֹּקֶר הָרַעֲנָן,
עוֹדוֹ רוֹחֵץ בַּטָּל וְהֵילֵל בֶּן־שַׁחַר עוֹד מַבְהִיק,
בְּאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם וְהַשָּׁעָה? – עֶפְרוֹנִי – הוּא הָיָה הָרִאשׁוֹן
וְעָלָה עַל כְּנָפָיו אֶל עָל וְהִמְטִיר מִשָּׁם מַנְגִּינוֹתָיו,
מֵעִיר הַדְּרוֹרִים בַּגָּג, וְעַל פֹּארוֹת הַסְּבָךְ הָאַנְקוֹרִים. –
שְׁנִיָּה אָז תִּיקַץ מִשְּׁנָתָהּ הַחַמָּה וְלוֹהֲטִים פָּנֶיהָ:
בּוֹשָׁה כִּי אֵחֲרָה קוּם, נֶחְפָּזָה הִיא אֶל עֲבוֹדָתָהּ
לַעֲבִיר מַכְחוֹל עַל צִיץ וְלָשִׂים בַּפּוּךְ כְּנַף צִפֹּרֶת,
לְסַלְסֵל בְּרַצֵּי גַל נִדָּח, קַשְׂקַשּׂוֹת הָאָקוּנוּס לְהָפֵז,

Warming frog eggs in the reedy recesses of fens.
She sent a waking ray to the bees: "Wake up, sleepy," and urged
A tardy grain of wheat. — Third, awoke the old woman,
The Rabbi's widow, Gittel, and she opened her shining eyes.
Pure blue, clear, without even a rack of light cloud,
The sky stretched and wrapped in fresh grasses,
Just now opening their eyes, pasture and steppes sparkle;
And tranquillity dreams in everything, a desolute sanctuary's silence,
As if sky above and earth below were amazed
At the aura's sight and at their own beauty.

Gittel hurriedly arose from her warm bed
(She covered herself with a quilt, though the cool days were already gone),
She washed her hands in a two-handle copper basin —
This basin was very old, massy and solid,
Polished to glowing with crushed brick.
(It had been a gift from her aunt, may she rest in peace,
Given to her on her betrothal day as a remembrance,
A precious utensil — and it was only twice repewtered after.)
The lips of the old woman whispered, for she prayed
Quietly as she did every day and her eyes laughed and shone.
It seemed to her as if the universe greeted her now with a charming smile,
As if everything was glad, rejoicing at life's abundant beauty.
Before her prayer was done she sensed her spotted cat
Lying at her feet, wailing and licking her dress.

לְהָחֵם בֵּיצֵי הַצְּפַרְדְּעִים בְּסֵתֶר קָנֶה וּבִצָּה.
שָׁלְחָה קַו מֵקִיץ לַדְּבוֹרִים: ″הָקִיצוּ, יְשֵׁנִים″ וּמְזָרְזָה
בְּגַרְגֵּר שֶׁל דָּגָן שֶׁפִּגֵּר. – וּשְׁלִישִׁית נֵעוֹרָה הַזְּקֵנָה
גִּיטְל, אַלְמְנַת הָרַב, וַתִּפְקַח עֵינֶיהָ הַמְּאִירוֹת.
צַחִים וּכְלִילֵי־הַתְּכֵלֶת, בְּאֵין זֵכֶר לְעָב קַל בַּמָּרוֹם,
הֶאֱהִילוּ שָׁמַיִם, וַעֲטוּפֵי עֲשָׂבִים רַעֲנַנִּים,
פָּקְחוּ זֶה עַתָּה עֵינֵיהֶם, הִבְרִיקוּ הַמִּגְרָשׁ וְהַשְּׂדֵמָה;
וְשַׁלְוָה חוֹלֶמֶת בַּכֹּל, דּוּמִיַּת בֵּית־מִקְדָּשׁ שֶׁשָּׁמֵם,
כְּאִלּוּ שָׁמַיִם בָּרוֹם וְהָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת בְּתִמָּהוֹן
הֻכּוּ לְמַרְאֵה הַזִּיו וּתְמֵהִים בְּעַצְמָם עַל יָפְיָם.

מְהֵרָה גִּיטְל וַתָּקָם מֵעַל מִטָּתָהּ הַחַמָּה
(הָיְתָה מִתְכַּסָּה בַּשְּׂמִיכָה וְאִם עָבְרוּ כְּבָר יְמֵי צִנָּה),
נָטְלָה יָדֶיהָ בְּסֵפֶל נְחֹשֶׁת בֶּן־יָדוֹתַיִם.
עַתִּיק הָיָה הַסֵּפֶל מְאֹד, כָּבֵד מִשְׁקָל וּמוּצָק,
מַבְרִיק וּמַזְהִיר, כְּבָא מִמֵּרוּק בִּלְבֵנָה כְּתוּתָה
(דּוֹרוֹן לָהּ הָיָה מֵאֵת דּוֹדָתָהּ, עָלֶיהָ הַשָּׁלוֹם,
וְנָתְנָה לָהּ אוֹתוֹ בְּיוֹם חַג כְּלוּלוֹתֶיהָ לְזִכָּרוֹן,
כְּלִי מְאֹד יָקָר – וּבְדִיל מֵאָז אַךְ פַּעֲמַיִם צִפּוּהוּ).
לַחַשׁ לְשִׂפְתֵי הַזְּקֵנָה, כִּי אֶת תְּפִלּוֹתֶיהָ הִתְפַּלְּלָה
חֶרֶשׁ וּכְדַרְכָּהּ יוֹם יוֹם, וְעֵינֶיהָ צוֹחֲקוֹת וּמְאִירוֹת;
נִדְמָה לָהּ, כְּאִלּוּ הַיְקוּם בִּצְחוֹק־חֵן יְקַדְּמֶנָּה הַפַּעַם,
וְהַכֹּל שָׂמֵחַ וְשָׂשׂ עַל שִׁפְעַת־הַחַיִּים וְיָפְיָם.
וְטֶרֶם תְּפִלָּתָהּ תְּכַלֶּה כְּבָר הִרְגִּישׁ בָּהּ חֲתוּלָהּ הַבָּרֹד,
נָח לְרַגְלֶיהָ וּמְיַלֵּל בְּתַחֲנוּנִים וּמְלַקֵּק שִׂמְלָתָהּ;

He had grown thin and his hair was falling out
(it is the season of cats, their wailing is heard in the nights).
"Shame on you, old fool," the old woman fumed at him
And she filled a potsherd with milk and gave it to the spotted cat,
And the animal lapped hungrily, famished from its night wanderings.

Gittel watched the cat lapping the milk and felt
Suddenly in her soul hunger and in her nostrils
The smell of *levivot* filled with cheese
And washed in buttermilk — steam rising in the pot from the boiling water.
A smile was on the old woman's lips, she laughed at herself in her heart.
How comes this desire? — She turned her step to the cellar
Heavy with coolness, for there were the cheeses and pitchers of buttermilk.
She is deep in the cellar — suddenly the sound of the dog's barking
Rasps her ear, and the voice of someone talking:
"Be off, go, son of Satan." It is Domaha's voice as she comes,
But Sirka still kept barking, and Domaha lifted
Her cane, a staff of light almond wood, over the dog's back,
Her blow came hard at his thin knee.
He began to set up a wail from the shrewd pain and fled,
Tucking his sparse tail between his legs and hobbling on three.
It was just then Gittel came to greet this Gentile woman:
"Good morning to you, Gittele." "And a good omen for you; see,
Here is a full pot in my hands and so I meet you, Domaha."
"Peace to you, Gittel, my dove!" — and Domaha stands her cane

בְּשָׂרוֹ כָּחַשׁ מִשֶּׁמֶן וּשְׂעָרוֹ הוֹלֵךְ וְנוֹשֵׁר
(וְהַיָּמִים יְמֵי הֶחָתוּלִים וִילֵלָם נִשְׁמַע בַּלֵּילוֹת).
״אִי לְךָ, זָקֵן מִשְׁתַּטֶּה!״ – תִּתְרַעֵם עָלָיו הַזְּקֵנָה, –
וְחֶרֶשׂ שֶׁל דּוּד מִלְאָה חָלָב וַתִּתֵּן לַחֲתוּלָה הַבָּרֹד,
וְלָקְקָה הַחַיָּה בְּתֵאָבוֹן, כִּי רְעֵבָה מִלֵּיל נְדוּדֶיהָ.

רָאֲתָה גִּיטְל חֲתוּלָה הַלּוֹקֵק הֶחָלָב וְהִרְגִּישָׁה
פִּתְאֹם בְּנַפְשָׁהּ גַּם הִיא תַּאֲוַת־הָאֹכֶל, וּבְאַפָּהּ
רֵיחַ שֶׁל לְבִיבוֹת מְמֻלָּאוֹת בִּגְבִינָה עֲשׂוּיָה
וְרוֹחֲצוֹת בְּזִבְדָּה – וְהָאֵד עוֹלֶה בַּסִּיר מִן הָרוֹתְחִים.
בַּת־צְחוֹק עַל שִׂפְתֵי הַזְּקֵנָה, כִּי צָחֲקָה בְּלִבָּהּ עַל עַצְמָהּ:
אוֹתוֹ הַחֵשֶׁק מִנַּיִן? – וַתָּשֶׂם פְּעָמֶיהָ לַמַּרְתֵּף,
כְּבֶד הַצִּנָּה, כִּי שָׁם הַגְּבִינָה וְכַדֵּי הַזִּבְדָּה.
הִיא עוֹד בַּמַּרְתֵּף הֶעָמֹק – וּפִתְאֹם קוֹל נְבִחַת הַכֶּלֶב
צוֹרֵם הָאֹזֶן מְאֹד, וְעוֹד קוֹלוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם בְּדַבְּרוֹ:
״סוּר לְךָ, סוּר בְּכוֹר־שָׂטָן!״–וְהַקּוֹל קוֹל דּוֹמָחָה בְּבוֹאָהּ,
אֶפֶס לֹא עָמַד סִרְקָה מִנְּבוֹחַ; אָז תָּרִים דּוֹמָחָה
מַקְלָהּ, גֶּזַע לוּז רַךְ, עַל גַּבּוֹ שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ הַכֶּלֶב,
וְהָיְתָה פְּגִיעָתָהּ מְאֹד רָעָה בְּאַרְכֻּבָּתוֹ הַצְּנוּמָה;
הִתְחִיל בּוֹכֶה מְאֹד מֵעָצְמַת מַכְאוֹבוֹ – וַיָּנוֹס,
תָּחוּב זְנָבוֹ הַמְדֻלְדָּל בֵּין רַגְלָיו, וְהוּא מְדַדֶּה עַל שָׁלֹשׁ.
וַיָּצְאָה כְּרֶגַע גַּם גִּיטְל לְקַדֵּם פְּנֵי אוֹתָהּ הַ״גּוֹיָה״.
– ״צַפְרָא טָבָא לָךְ, גִּיטְלִי!״ – ״סִמָּן טוֹב לָךְ, רְאִי נָא:
הִנֵּה בְּיָדַי כְּלִי מָלֵא וְכָכָה פְּגַשְׁתִּיךְ, דּוֹמָחָה!״
– ״שָׁלוֹם לָךְ, גִּיטְלִי יוֹנָתִי!״ – וַתַּעֲמֵד דּוֹמָחָה אֶת מַקְלָהּ

In the corner of the small room that was the kitchen —
"And how is your health?" "Your eyes see, Domaha.
By the Master of the World's grace, I slowly make my way;
And where do *your* legs carry you?" "I go to the church
And here too is milk in a pitcher and a loaf of bread, I bring them
To Father Vassily for the holiday." "Oh, Oh, Domaha, what holiday is this?"
"Just so, is today a small matter?
This is the Saint's day of Little Mikola. You forgot? Our people too,
Many of them, healthy ones, go out to the fields on holidays, like today.
Faith has disappeared in the people. Who comes to the monastery service?
Two old men, three old women, while they are still alive.
No strength is left to struggle with children of these brazen days.
These little ones — every puppy of them — if you tell them, go to pray,
Wag their tongues immediately: Be off! Why *today* of all days? —
The generation dwindles, and how sad are the walls of the monastery.
When I come into the court, who is there? A blind man, a lame man,
another pauper.
The sad walls of the house and Father Vassily in the midst.
Sad, too, the voice of the bells, as if weeping for forsaken holiness.
But here also among your own there are heretics, renegades.
Every unclean thing, they eat — and pig! They smoke on the Sabbath!
I remember when I was a child: Sabbath and life died down,
Tranquillity, silence in the market place. I was almost terrified.
Now — it is a shame, isn't it? The Sabbath, and they trade and sell.
I am too ashamed, I, by my head, to come on Sabbath,

בְּפִנַּת הַחֶדֶר הַקָּט, שֶׁהָיָה גַּם חֲדַר־לְבַשֵּׁל, –
– "הֲיְנוּ הַךְ. וּבְרִיאוּתֵךְ?" – "עֵינַיִךְ הָרוֹאוֹת, דּוֹמָחָה:
בְּחַסְדֵי רִבּוֹנוֹ־שֶׁל־עוֹלָם אֲשָׁרֵךְ דְּרָכַי לְאִטִּי.
לְאָן יְשָׁאוּךְ רַגְלַיִךְ?" – "אֶל בֵּית־הַתְּפִלָּה אָנֹכִי,
וְהִנֵּה גַּם חָלָב בַּכַּד וְכִכַּר־הַלֶּחֶם, הֲבֵאתִי
לְאַבָּא בַּסִילִי בֶּחָג". – "הוֹי, הוֹי, דּוֹמָחָה, מַה חַג זֶה?"
"הַיְנוּ הַךְ, גִּיטֶל, אָטוּ מִלְּתָא זוּטַרְתָּא הַיּוֹם?
הַיּוֹם "מִיקוֹלַה הַקָּטָן"! שָׁכַחַתְּ? וְאוּלָם גַּם מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ
רַבִּים וְכֵן שְׁלֵמִים כַּיּוֹם הַשָּׂדֶה הֵם יוֹצְאִים בַּחַגִּים.
אָפְסָה אֱמוּנָה מֵעָם. מִי בָּא אֶל עֲבוֹדַת הַמִּנְזָר?
יְשִׁישִׁים שְׁנַיִם וְשָׁלֹשׁ זְקֵנוֹת, כָּל עוֹדָם בַּחַיִּים;
כֹּחַ כְּבָר אַיִן לְהִתְגָּרוֹת בְּעוּלֵי־הַיָּמִים הַחֲצוּפִים.
אֵלֶּה הַקְּטַנִּים – כָּל כְּלַבְלֵב, כִּי תֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ:
– לֵךְ אֶל הַתְּפִלָּה –
חוֹרֵץ לְשׁוֹנוֹ מִיָּד: – סוּרִי! מַה יּוֹם מִיָּמִים?
הוֹלֵךְ וּפוֹחֵת הַדּוֹר, גַּם כָּתְלֵי הַמִּנְזָר מַה־נּוּגִים!
בְּבוֹאִי בֶּחָצֵר – מִי שָׁם? עִוֵּר, פִּסֵּחַ וְעוֹד דַּלְפוֹן,
כָּתְלֵי־הַבַּיִת הַנּוּגִים וְאַבָּא בַּסִילִי בְּתוֹכָךְ.
וְנוּגֶה גַּם קוֹל הַפַּעֲמוֹנִים, כִּמְבַכִּים עֲזוּבַת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ.
וְהִנֵּה גַּם מִשֶּׁלָּכֶם מִינִים הֵם וְאֶפִּיקוֹרְסִים,
אוֹכְלִים כָּל טְרֵפָה וַחֲזִיר וּמַעֲלִים עָשָׁן בְּשַׁבָּת.
יַלְדָּה הָיִיתִי, זְכוּרַתְנִי: שַׁבָּת – וּמֵתוּ הַחַיִּים,
שַׁלְוָה וָשֶׁקֶט בַּשּׁוּק, כִּמְעַט אֲחָזוּנִי חֲרָדוֹת.
עַתָּה – חֶרְפָּה הִיא, כְּלוּם לֹא? שַׁבָּת – וְסָחֹר וּמָכֹר.
בּוֹשָׁה אָנֹכִי – אֲנִי, חֵי רֹאשִׁי, מִלָּבוֹא בַּשַּׁבָּת

To buy something in a Jewish shop. Isn't it so, Gittel?
Zalman the sheep merchant was at our place the day before yesterday,
Buying and selling on the holiday. — Zalman! — I said, Will you truly
Deceive your soul, will you live forever and never die?
And your God, what will he say? Aren't you afraid of his law?
It is Sabbath today! – And what did he reply? This Zalman turned to my son
And said to him: 'Gritza! Do you feel like giving us your mother,
She shall be our Rabbi?' — By my head, so he said, that brazen one.
And so it is, but how are you? What is your cheese for, and the buttermilk?"
Ashamed, Gittel answered: "I don't know myself. The smell
Of *levivot* came to my nostrils and I was unable to control myself.
There is a folk-saying: An old person is like a child.
A man lives long, but without his good sense he is brought
To the grave. . . ." Then the peal of bells sounded from the monastery.
Domaha grasped her cane, her pitcher, and her loaf of bread.
"Peace to you." "Go in peace" — and she hurried to leave the house.
The words of the Gentile woman are true, Gittel thought in her heart.
The generation dwindles. What are we? Moreover, what are our children?
Zalman the merchant . . . and my son? And my granddaughter, Razele,
    may she live.
Woe, Woe! Were we and our fathers so?

Gittel went and took a large pastry board down from the wall,
Tablets of sumach. It was made heavy and pink,
A dark reddish embroidery of veins spread over its surface.
She put the pastry board on the table and took up the sieve,

לִקְנוֹת דָּבָר בַּחֲנוּת־יְהוּדִית, הַיְנוּ הַךְ, גִּיטְלִי.
וְזַלְמָן הַסּוֹחֵר בְּצֹאן, אַךְ שִׁלְשֹׁם הָיָה אֶצְלֵנוּ,
קוֹנֶה וּמוֹכֵר בֶּחָג. – זַלְמָן! – אָמַרְתִּי – הַאֻמְנָם
מַשְׁלֶה אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ אַתָּה, לְעוֹלָם תִּחְיֶה וְלֹא תָמוּת?
וֵאלֹהֵיכֶם מַה יֹּאמַר? הַאֵינְךָ יָרֵא אֶת דִּינוֹ? –
שַׁבָּת הַיּוֹם! – וּמַה שָּׂח? אֶל בְּנִי אֲזַי יִפְנֶה זֶה זַלְמָן
וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ: גְּרִיצָה! הֲיֵשׁ אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ לָתֵת אֶת אִמְּךָ,
וְהָיְתָה הִיא לָנוּ לְרַב? – חֵי רֹאשִׁי, כֹּה אָמַר הֶחָצוּף.
הַיְנוּ הַךְ, וּמָה אַתְּ? וּמַה לָּךְ הַגְּבִינָה וְהַזִּבְדָּה?”
בּוֹשָׁה גִּיטְל עָנָתָה: ”נַפְשִׁי בַּל אֵדַע... בָּא רֵיחַ
לְבִיבוֹת בְּאַפִּי, וְכָךְ לֹא יָכֹלְתִּי לִמְשׁוֹל בְּרוּחִי;
הַיְנוּ דְאָמְרֵי אִינָשֵׁי: דּוֹמֶה זָקֵן לְיֶלֶד.
רַבּוֹת יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם וְנִבְעַר־מִדַּעַת לַקֶּבֶר
יוּבָל...” – וּבְאוֹתוֹ הָרֶגַע בָּא צִלְצוּל פַּעֲמוֹנֵי הַמִּנְזָר,
אָחֲזָה דוֹמָחָה בַּמַּקֵּל, בַּכַּד וּבְכִכַּר־הַלֶּחֶם.
–„שָׁלוֹם לָךְ!” – „לְשָׁלוֹם לֵכִי!” – וַתְּמַהֵר לַעֲזוֹב הַבָּיִת.
„צָדְקוּ דִבְרֵי הַ„גּוֹיָה” – כָּךְ גָּמְרָה בְלִבָּהּ הַזְּקֵנָה, –
הוֹלֵךְ וּפוֹחֵת הַדּוֹר; מָה אָנוּ, וְכָל שֶׁכֵּן בָּנֵינוּ?
זַלְמָן הַסּוֹחֵר... וּבְנִי? וְנֶכְדָּתִי רֵיזֶלֶ'ה תִּחְיֶה?
אוֹי וַאֲבוֹי! הֲכֵן הָיִינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ וַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ?”

בָּאָה וְנָטְלָה מֵעַל הַקִּיר הַמַּעֲרוֹךְ הַגָּדוֹל:
לוּחוֹת עֲצֵי־הָאוֹג, אַדִּירִים וּוְרֻדִּים עָשׂוּהוּ,
וְרִקְמָה אֲמֻצָּה שֶׁל גִּידִים מְכַבְצֶבֶת וְעוֹלָה עַל גַּבּוֹ.
שָׂמָה הַמַּעֲרוֹךְ עַל פְּנֵי הַשֻּׁלְחָן וַתִּקַּח הַנָּפָה,

She put very fine wheat flour into the sieve.
She sieved and scattered quickly and it danced in her nimble hands.
Like dust of clear snow into the holes of the sieve pushed
Grains of flour and so they rested on the whole board,
Grain after grain of dust. And the surface grew
Shining, glowing, and pure as the first snow that falls
And kisses the autumn earth: Bear greetings from the Prince of Winter!
Actually like grains of dust that fall, descend at their leisure,
Grain after grain, alone, caught and drifted the drama
Of Gittel's months. And everything that had happened to her was before her
Good and bad, years of work, moments of joy: —
She was a child . . . a bride . . . already a mother. Once alert, here
She is already old, a grandmother with a granddaughter, Razele, may she live.

Dust of pure snow pushed through the holes of the sieve,
Grain after grain, alone, they fall and descend at their leisure.
Then with her hands Gittel gathers the flour and makes of it
A circular mound and in the mound's center a hole.
Silently she gathers the flour, and her hands are light as she gathers,
And before her eyes her granddaughter smiles: Razele, may she live.

II

Clean, pure, and soft — the child will open its eyes:
Wrapped up in itself, the foreign element has not thrust into its soul.
Good and evil slumber and all its spirit's strength lies within.

נָתְנָה בַּנָּפָה הַהִיא קֶמַח־סֹלֶת מְאֹד דַּקָּה,
נִפְּתָה וְזֵרְתָה מִיָּד וַתְּרַקֵּד בְּיָדֶיהָ הַמְּהִירוֹת.
כְּאַבְקוֹת הַשֶּׁלֶג הַצַּח נִתְחֲבוּ בְּנִקְבֵי הַנָּפָה
גַּרְגְּרֵי הַקֶּמַח וְכֹה נָחוּ עַל פְּנֵי כָל הַמַּעֲרוֹךְ,
גַּרְגֵּר שֶׁל אָבָק עַל גַּרְגֵּר. וְהָלַךְ הַמִּצָּע וְגָדֵל,
מַבְרִיק וּמַבְהִיק וְצַח, כַּשֶּׁלֶג הָרִאשׁוֹן, הַיּוֹרֵד
וְנוֹשֵׁק אֶת אַדְמַת הַסְּתָו: שְׂאִי שָׁלוֹם מֵאֵת שַׂר שֶׁל חֹרֶף!
מַמָּשׁ כְּגַרְגְּרֵי הָאָבָק, הַנּוֹפֵל, הַיּוֹרֵד לְאִטּוֹ,
גַּרְגֵּר וְגַרְגֵּר לְבָד, נֶאֱחֲזוּ, חָלְפוּ בְּמַחֲזֶה
יַרְחֵי גִּיטְל וְכֹל שֶׁעָבַר עָלֶיהָ – לְפָנֶיהָ,
טוֹבָה וְרָעָה, שָׁנִים שֶׁל עָמָל וְדַקּוֹת שֶׁל אֹשֶׁר: –
יַלְדָּה הִיא... כַּלָּה... כְּבָר אֵם... וּפַעַם נְעוּרָה – וְהִנֵּה
זְקֵנָה כְּבָר, וְהִיא סַבְתָּא וְנֶכְדָּה לָהּ, רֵיזֶ׳לֶה תִּחְיֶה.

כְּאַבְקוֹת הַשֶּׁלֶג הַצַּח נִתְחֲבוּ בְּנִקְבֵי הַנָּפָה
גַּרְגֵּר וְגַרְגֵּר לְבָד, נוֹפְלִים וְיוֹרְדִים לְאִטָּם;
בְּיָדֶהָ אָז תֶּאֱסֹף גִּיטְל הַקֶּמַח, וַתַּעַשׂ מִמֶּנּוּ
סוֹלְלָה הוֹלֶכֶת בְּעִגּוּל וְחוֹר בַּסּוֹלְלָה בַּתָּוֶךְ.
דּוּמָם אָסְפָה הַקֶּמַח, וְרַכּוֹת יָדֶיהָ בְּאָסְפָהּ,
וְנֶגֶד עֵינֶיהָ מְצַחֶקֶת נֶכְדָּתָהּ רֵיזֶ׳לֶה תִּחְיֶה.

II

נָקִי, וְטָהוֹר וָרַךְ – כֵּן יִפְקַח עֵינֵיהוּ הַיֶּלֶד.
כֻּלּוֹ כְּמַתְכֻּנְתּוֹ שֶׁלּוֹ, וְאֵין לְזָר חֵלֶק בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.
נָמִים הַטּוֹב וְהָרָע, כָּל כֹּחוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּקִרְבּוֹ.

The child grows in the shadow of wings in the parents' hiding place,
Its soul like theirs, and it absorbs into itself their being.
Days pass and there comes a day (Gittel took six eggs,
She cracked them and put white and yolk into the wheat flour,
She kneaded the dough properly, kneading and kneading vigorously
And its appearance changed quickly, easily, and it was like clear amber)
When the child stands outside the nest of its parents who guard him,
And all who go back and forth before him lay upon him their hand
That injects him with filth, that scratches an abscess on his back —
It is done by main force daringly against the gentle parent hand.

Razele grew and was beautiful, the house was filled with gaiety.
In early morning, like the lark, she greeted the sun with song
And when the sun turned down to evening she closed her eyes, wearied
By her day's toil, chirping, skittering, singing
Dashing up the sand, teaching her dolls to pray
"I thank Thee." Then Gittel's son left the village,
And went away to live in the city. And after five long years
Gittel again saw her granddaughter who had left the nest.
She saw her but did not recognize her fledgling:
Then the child fell on the grandmother's bosom,
Her spirit subdued by the voice of the past yet living in her heart;
This moment gone, she opened lovely eyes
To pierce the old woman's heart with looks,
Canvassing and questioning: in spirit she was already a stranger to her.

הוֹלֵךְ וְגָדֵל הַיֶּלֶד בְּצֵל כַּנְפֵי הוֹרִים וּבְסִתְרָם,
נַפְשׁוֹ דוֹמָה לְנַפְשָׁם וְהוּא סוֹפֵג אֶל תּוֹכוֹ יֵשׁוּתָם.
וְיָמִים יַחֲלוֹפוּ; וְיֵשׁ יוֹם (וְגִיטְל לָקְחָה שֵׁשׁ בֵּיצִים,
טְרָפָה וְשָׂמָה הַחֶלְבּוֹן וְהַחֶלְמוֹן בְּקֶמַח־הַסֹּלֶת,
לָשָׁה הַקֶּמַח כַּחֹק, לִישָׁה וְלִישָׁה חֲזָקָה,
וְהָפַךְ עֵינוֹ חִישׁ קַל וַיְהִי כְּעֵין הָעִנְבָּר הַשָּׁקוּף)
וְעָמַד הַיֶּלֶד מִחוּץ לְקַן אֲבוֹתָיו בָּם יֶחֱסֶה,
וְהָיְתָה בוֹ יָדָם שֶׁל כָּל הָעוֹבְרִים וְהַשָּׁבִים עַל פָּנָיו,
וְנָתְנָה בוֹ מִזֻּהֲמָתָהּ, וְשָׂרְטָה עַל גַּבּוֹ שָׂרֶטֶת,
וְנִחֲתָה בְּכֹחַ וָעֹז, לְעֻמַּת יַד־אָבוֹת הָרַכָּה.

רֵיזֶ׳לֶה גָּדְלָה וַתִּיף, וַתְּמַלֵּא הַבַּיִת עֲלִיצוּת.
הִשְׁכִּים בַּבֹּקֶר בְּשִׁיר תְּקַדֵּם פְּנֵי שֶׁמֶשׁ כְּעֶפְרוֹנִי,
וְנָטְתָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לַעֲרוֹב וְסָגְרָה עֵינֶיהָ, עֲיֵפָה
מֵעֲמָלָהּ בַּיּוֹם, מְצַפְצֵף, מְכַרְכֵּר, מְרַנֵּן
וּמֵהִתְפַּלֵּשׁ בַּחוֹל, מְלַמֵּד בֻּבָּתָהּ הִתְפַּלֵּל
„מוֹדֶה אֲנִי”. אַךְ אָז יַעֲזוֹב בְּנָהּ הָעִירָה –
יָצָא וַיָּגָר בִּכְרָךְ. וּמִקֵּץ חָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲרֻכּוֹת
רָאֲתָה שֵׁנִית אָז גִּיטְל נֶכְדָּתָהּ, שֶׁיָּצְאָה אֶת קִנָּהּ,
רָאֲתָה אוֹתָהּ, אַךְ לֹא הִכִּירָה נֶכְדָּתָהּ־אֶפְרוֹחָהּ;
רֶגַע עוֹד נָפְלָה אֶל חֵיק הָאֵם־הַזְּקֵנָה הַיַּלְדָּה:
נַפְשָׁהּ נִכְנְעָה לְקוֹל הֶעָבָר הַחַי עוֹד בְּלִבָּהּ;
וְאוּלָם הָרֶגַע כִּי חָלַף – פָּקְחָה עֵינֶיהָ הַיָּפוֹת,
שׁוֹאֲלוֹת וְחוֹדְרוֹת לְלֵב הַזְּקֵנָה, לָדַעַת מָה אִתָּהּ,
לָתוּר וְלִדְרֹשׁ הַכֹּל, כִּי זָרָה כְּבָר הָיְתָה לָהּ בְּרוּחָהּ.

Truly Gittel saw that changes had taken place;
And her son was different too, but she looked away,
Refusing to see it all, as if frightened at the sight.
The dough took on the redness of an Indian topaz,
And Gittel palmed the smoothness of the rolling pin.
Over the dough she passed it, over the four corners
She rolled and smoothed hard to make a single layer,
One thickness and one texture in all its parts;
She took the greatest care there were no gaps and breaks:
It turned out round and thin, as if fashioned with a saw and plane.
For a while it seemed as if the dough fought back,
Caught at the wood's smoothness, held on with great stubbornness,
Leaned on the surface of the rolling pin, clung with audacious strength,
But Gittel carefully overcame it with her quick movements.

Again, but after two years, she saw her.
Razele came from the Gymnasium, for she was a student,
Her thin body in the standard reddish uniform —
They are squeezing this little body with a mighty hand.
The same measure for everything, order and a book of rules.
Her hand gesticulated to her teacher's words, the voice of authority.
She bowed very properly, she spoke with judgment.
She brought with her a prize: *The Poems of Pushkin* in a binding
Of elegant purple cloth embossed with gold
("For good behavior and for devotion to studies").

אָמְנָם, רָאֲתָה גִיטְל, כִּי רַבּוֹת הַחֲדָשׁוֹת צָמְחוּ
וְאַחֵר הָיָה גַּם בְּנָהּ, אֲבָל הֶעְלִימָה עֵינֶיהָ,
מְמָאֲנָה לִרְאוֹת הַכֹּל, כִּירֵאָה מִפְּנֵי הַמַּרְאֶה.
כְּפִטְדַת־הֹדּוּ אֲמֻצָּה כֵּן נַעֲשָׂה מַרְאֵה הַבָּצֵק.
לָקְחָה אָז גִּיטְל בְּכַף אֶת הַמַּעֲגִילָה הַחֲלָקָה,
אוֹתָהּ הֶעֱבִירָה עַל פְּנֵי הַבָּצֵק אֶל אַרְבַּע פִּנּוֹתָיו,
הַעֲבֵר וְהַחֲלֵק בְּעֹז לְהַיְשִׁירוֹ, לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ לְשִׁכְבָה
אַחַת, וּמִדָּה וָקֶצֶב אֶחָד לְכָל הַחֲלָקִים;
וְשָׂמָה אֶת לִבָּהּ לְבַל יֵצְאוּ בוֹ פְּרָצִים וְחַדּוּדִים.
עָגֹל הָיָה וָדַק, כְּעָשׂוּי בְּמַשּׂוֹר וּבְמַעֲצָד.
וְנִדְמֶה לִרְגָעִים כְּאִלּוּ עוֹמֵד עַל נַפְשׁוֹ הַבָּצֵק,
אוֹחֵז בְּחֶלְקַת הָעֵץ, וְנֶאֱחָז בְּרֹב קַשְׁיוּת־עֹרֶף,
דָּבֵק בְּחָזְקָה וּבְעֹז, מִתְרַפֵּק עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּעֲגִילָה...
וְטִפְּלָה בוֹ גִּיטְל מְאֹד וּזְרִיזָה הָיְתָה בְּמַעֲשֶׂיהָ.

...וְעוֹד הַפַּעַם אַךְ כַּעֲבֹר שְׁנָתַיִם, אוֹתָהּ רָאָתָה:
רֵיזֶ׳לֶה בָּאָה מִבֵּית־הַגִּמְנַסְיוֹן, כִּי הָיְתָה „תַּלְמִידָה״;
בְּגָדִים אֲמֻצִּים כַּחֹק עַל פְּנֵי גִזְרָתָהּ הַדַּקָּה,
אוֹסְרִים וּמְכַוְּצִים בְּכַף אַדִּירִים הַגְּוִיָּה הַקְּטַנָּה.
מִדָּה וּמְשׂוּרָה לַכֹּל, וָסֵדֶר וּמִשְׁטָר קָבוּעַ.
יָדָהּ הֵנִיעָה כְּדִבַּר מוֹרָתָהּ וּגְזֵרַת רָאשֶׁיהָ,
עוֹשָׂה הַקִּדָּה כַּדָּת, וּבְמִשְׁפָּט כִּלְכְּלָה דְּבָרֶיהָ.
תְּשׁוּרָה הֵבִיאָה אָז אִתָּהּ: שִׁירֵי פּוּשְׁקִין בִּכְרִיכָה
יָפָה וְנֶהְדָּרָה מִבַּד אַרְגָּמָן, וְזָהָב צִפּוּיָהּ,
„עֵקֶב הַנְהָגָה כַּדָּת וְכַדִּין וְהַתְמָדָה בְּלִמּוּדִים״.

All day the girl sat over the book and read
Poem after poem in a high-tuned voice like a melodious singer,
And her eyes were fire and her cheeks flame.
The book was precious in the eyes of the old woman and the girl:
Each day the granddaughter read it till she rested in the evening
And the old woman placed it in the bookcase among the other books,
"Tzena Urena"* and the beloved "Supplications of Sara Bat-Tuvim."*
When first she did so, her heart pounded
But she excused the unclean blemish,*
For it was not like the other books her granddaughter brought
To stack in the corner of the room… (and the old woman took a glass
Bottle, thin and round, and thrust it into the prepared dough,
She pressed the mouth of the bottle — circles formed.
The glass entered the dough and its opening cut like a knife.
All alike were the many circles she made;
They came out every one a twin, like objects poured in a factory).

The vise of discipline and law that presses on the student's soul
Will press, cut, form his being to the approved shape,
Straight and standard; one never thinks to alter it.
Rejected, stepped on, wounded, the soul of the little one contracts
Under the mighty force whose long pressure alienates it —
It dwindles like a candle struggling with a storm wind.
With almost no resources left, at the end of many days,
The child will leave the threshold of its school, its thoughts

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כָּל הַיּוֹם אֶל הַסֵּפֶר יָשְׁבָה הַנַּעֲרָה וַתִּקְרָא
שִׁירָה וְשִׁירָה בְּקוֹל רָם וּבְנִגּוּן, כִּמְזַמֵּר בִּרְנָנִים,
וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיהָ כָּאֵשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי לְחָיֶיהָ הַלָּהַב.
יָקָר הָיָה הַסֵּפֶר בְּעֵינֵי הַזְּקֵנָה וְהַנַּעֲרָה:
יוֹם־יוֹם בּוֹ קָרְאָה הַנֶּכְדָּה, וּבְנוּחָהּ בָּעֶרֶב הֶעֱמִידָה
אוֹתוֹ הַזְּקֵנָה בַּאֲרוֹן־הַסְּפָרִים בֵּין יֶתֶר סְפָרֶיהָ:
„צְאֶינָה וּרְאֶינָה" וְהַתְּחִנּוֹת הַחֲבִיבוֹת שֶׁל „שָׂרָה בַּת־טוֹבִים".
אָמְנָם, נוֹקְפָה מִתְּחִלָּה הָיָה לִבָּהּ בַּעֲשׂוֹתָהּ,
אוּלָם הִיא לִמְּדָה זְכוּת עַל אוֹתָהּ הַ„טְרֵפָה־וְהַפְּסוּלָה",
יַעַן לֹא הָיְתָה כִּשְׁאָר הַסְּפָרִים הֵבִיאָה נֶכְדָּתָהּ,
לְהַעֲמִיד בְּפִנַּת־הֶחָדֶר… (וַתִּקַּח הַזְּקֵנָה צִנְצֶנֶת־
זְכוּכִית דַּקָּה עֲגֻלָּה וַתִּתֵּן בַּבָּצֵק הַמּוּכָן,
נָטְלָה וְלָחֲצָה אֶת פִּי הַצְּלוֹחִית – וַיֵּצְאוּ עִגּוּלִים.
נִכְנְסָה הַזְּכוּכִית בַּבָּצֵק וּפִיהָ בָּא חוֹתֵךְ כַּשַּׂכִּין.
מִדָּה אַחַת לְכָל הָעִגּוּלִים הָרַבִּים עָשְׂתָה.
תּוֹאֲמִים יָצְאוּ, כְּכֵלִים בְּבָתֵּי־הַחֲרֹשֶׁת יוּצָקוּ).

צְבַת הַמִּשְׁמַעַת וְהַחֹק, הַמְּעִיקָה עַל נֶפֶשׁ הַתַּלְמִיד,
תִּגְזוֹר וְתִלְחַץ וְתָצוּר יֵשׁוּתוֹ בַּצּוּרָה, שֶׁמְּצָאָהּ
טוֹבָה וִישָׁרָה, שֶׁאֵין לְהַרְהֵר אַחֲרֶיהָ לְשַׁנּוֹתָהּ.
וְנֶפֶשׁ הַקָּטָן תִּתְכַּוֵּץ, וְהִיא נִדְחָה, נִרְמֶסֶת וּדְווּיָה,
מִפְּנֵי הַנּוֹגֵשׂ הָעָז, הַשּׁוֹקֵד עָלֶיהָ לְהַחֲרִימָהּ:
הוֹלְכָה וּפוֹחֲתָה כַּנֵּר, הַנֶּאֱבָק עִם רוּחַ הַסָּעַר.
שָׂרִיד לָהּ אַיִן כִּמְעַט, – וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים,
וְעָזַב הַיֶּלֶד אֶת סַף בֵּית־סִפְרוֹ, וְהָיוּ מַחְשְׁבוֹתָיו

The thoughts of this one's book, its soul the creature of another book,
The sight of its eyes seen through the eyes of a dominating teacher,
Its voice the voice of this one or another,
It has gestures — peculiar gestures — and its soul is lost
To a cramping pressure...
And the old woman took the cheese,
Crumbled it in a bowl and mixed it with eggs;
She took the cheese and poured it carefully
In the circles of prepared dough which she had cut with the glass bottle.
When she had poured the cheese, she pressed the dough with her hands,
Closed it over the cheese, and the two became one.

The spirit of the tender child had ceased to fight,
It absorbed whatever its tutors had to give.
It cherished up the stranger's teaching, emerging after many days,
To the joy of parents and teachers, at the gate — a learned calf.
But sometimes the child will free itself from the pressure of its bonds,
And its soul is filled with hidden hate, eternal grudge
Against its oppressors, who gave it things to sanctify
Against its will: having no weapon in its hands,
It will cleave to everything forbidden by its tormentors.

Years passed and Razele once more returned.
A young woman in her prime when she returned to the nest,
This time not at all gay as she used to be, her eyes

מַחְשְׁבוֹת סְפָרָיו שֶׁל זֶה, וְנַפְשׁוֹ – יְצִיר סֵפֶר שֵׁנִי,
וְעֵינָיו רוֹאוֹת מִבַּעַד לְעֵינָיו שֶׁל מוֹרוֹ הַתַּקִּיף,
וְהָיָה גַם קוֹלוֹ כְּקוֹל מַדְרִיךְ זֶה אוֹ מִשְׁנֵהוּ,
תְּנוּעוֹת לוֹ – תְּנוּעוֹת הַלָּז, – וְנַפְשׁוֹ הוּא אָבְדָה בֵּינְתַיִם
בְּתוֹךְ הַלַּחַץ וְהַדֹּחַק...
וַתִּקַּח הַזְּקֵנָה הַגְּבִינָה,
מְעָכָה אוֹתָהּ בַּסַּף וְעַל בֵּיצִים אוֹתָהּ עָשָׂתָה,
לָקְחָה הַגְּבִינָה הַזֹּאת וַתִּתֵּן אוֹתָהּ בִּזְהִירוּת,
בְּעִגּוּל הַבָּצֵק, הֲכִינָה בַּעֲשׂוֹתָהּ בִּצְלוֹחִית הַזְּכוּכִית,
וְאַחֲרֵי תִתָּהּ הַגְּבִינָה, צָבְטָה הַבָּצֵק בְּיָדֶיהָ,
סָגְרָה עַל חֲתִיכוֹת הַגְּבִינָה – וַיִּהְיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם לְאֶחָד.

...נֶפֶשׁ הַיֶּלֶד הָרַךְ כְּבָר פָּסְקָה מִלִּלְחוֹם עַל עַצְמָהּ,
וְסָפְגָה וְקִבְּלָה הַכֹּל מִיַּד מַדְרִיכֶיהָ. וַתְּטַפַּח
בְּקִרְבָּהּ תּוֹרַת הַזָּר, בִּרְבוֹת הַיָּמִים גַּם תֵּצֵא,
לְשִׂמְחַת הוֹרִים וּמוֹרִים, הַשַּׁעֲרָה – עֵגֶל מְלֻמָּד.
וְאוּלָם יֵשׁ שֶׁמִּלַּחַץ כְּבָלָיו יִשְׁתַּחְרֵר הַיֶּלֶד,
וְנַפְשׁוֹ שִׂנְאָה מְסֻתֶּרֶת, מַשְׂטֵמַת עוֹלָמִים נִמְלָאָה
לְכָל מַכְנִיעֶיהָ וְלַאֲשֶׁר אִנְסוּהָ לְהַעֲרִיץ וּלְהַקְדִּישׁ
לַמְרוֹת רְצוֹנָהּ; וּבְאֵין מֶחָאָה אַחֶרֶת בְּיָדֶיהָ,
תִּדְבַּק בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר אִסּוּר מְעַנֶּיהָ חָל עָלָיו וַהֲרָמָיו.

...שָׁנִים עָבְרוּ, וַתָּשָׁב רֵיזֶל אֶל אִמָּהּ הַזְּקֵנָה.
עַלְמָה וּבְעֶצֶם נְעוּרֶיהָ שָׁבָה אֶל קִנָּהּ הַפַּעַם,
אֶפֶס עַלִּיזָה לֹא הָיְתָה כִּהְיוֹתָהּ מִקֶּדֶם, וְעֵינֶיהָ

Deep and full of melancholy. She was silent, reading
Day and night, as long as the kerosene lamp in her room stayed lit.
The old woman, thinking to give her some heart's-ease,
Took Pushkin out of the bookcase, where he was locked,
She gave it to Razele, and the young woman twisted her lips.
To see Pushkin insulted so made the old woman's soul grow sad;
She felt the insult, too, and it pained her heart.
With compassion she replaced this "unclean blemish" in the bookcase
Next to her supplications, her prayer book, and the "Tzena-Urena."

And even before the pancakes were prepared, in the depth of the stove water boiled,
Filling the pot and sending up vapor and bubbles.
The old woman took the *levivot* and put them into the boiling water
And the vapors covered them…
The sudden barking of Sirka
Came to Gittel's ears — the sound of words, abuse, a man's voice.
She went out and saw the postman of her village.
He brought her a letter. At once she recognized Razele's hand.
Heart pounding with joy, she tore off an edge of the envelope
And went close to the window pane to see the writing better.
At once a deathly pallor covered her lovely face;
Quickly she grasped the edge of the table, fearful of falling
To the ground. Her strength abandoned her then, but she recovered herself and sat on a chair.
The words of the letter were brief, ten lines, no more,
But how much the lines spoke to the old woman!

עָמְקוּ וְנִמְלְאוּ תוּגָה, וַתְּהִי מַחֲרִישָׁה וְקוֹרְאָה
יוֹמָם וָלֵיל, כָּל עוֹד הַנֵּפְט בַּמְּנוֹרָה בְּחַדְרָהּ.
חָפֹץ חָפְצָה הַזְּקֵנָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהּ נַחַת־רוּחַ –
לָקְחָה אֶת פּוּשְׁקִין מִתּוֹךְ אֲרוֹן־הַסְּפָרִים, בּוֹ נִסְגָּר,
וְנָתְנָה לְרֵיזֶ׳לֶה אוֹתוֹ – וַתְּעַקֵּם הָעַלְמָה שְׂפָתֶיהָ...
עָגְמָה נֶפֶשׁ הַזְּקֵנָה לִרְאוֹת אֶת פּוּשְׁקִין בְּעֶלְבּוֹנוֹ,
חָשָׁה בְּעֶלְבּוֹנוֹ גַּם הִיא, כְּאִלּוּ הִכְאִיבוּ אֶת לִבָּהּ,
שָׂמָה בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים הַ„טְּרֵפָה־וּפְסוּלָה” בָּאָרוֹן
יַחַד עִם כָּל תְּחִנּוֹתֶיהָ, הַ„סִּדּוּר” וְהַ„צְּאֶינָה וּרְאֶינָה”.

וְטֶרֶם נָכוֹנוּ הַלְּבִיבוֹת – וּבְיַרְכְּתֵי כִּירַיִם כְּבָר רָתְחוּ
מַיִם, שֶׁמִּלְאוּ הַסִּיר וַיַּעֲלוּ אֵד וּבַעְבּוּעִים.
לָקְחָה הַזְּקֵנָה הַלְּבִיבוֹת וַתַּשְׁמֵן פַּעַם בְּרוֹתְחִים
וְאֵדֵי הַמַּיִם כְּבָר כִּסּוּן...
וְנִבְחַת סִרְקָה הַפִּתְאוֹמִית
בָּאָה עַד אָזְנֵי גִּיטְל – וְקוֹל דְּבָרִים, קוֹל גִּדּוּף, קוֹל גָּבֶר.
יָצְאָה וְרָאֲתָה אֶת נוֹשֵׂא־הַמִּכְתָּבִים בִּכְפָרָהּ.
מִכְתָּב לָהּ הֵבִיא. מִיָּד הִכִּירָה כְּתָב־יָדָהּ שֶׁל רֵיזֶל.
בְּלֵבָב פּוֹעֵם מִגִּיל קָרְעָה אֶת קְצוֹת הַמַּעֲטָפָה,
קָרְבָה אֶל שִׁמְשׁוֹת הַחַלּוֹן לְהֵיטִיב לִרְאוֹת בַּכָּתוּב.
וְחִוְרַת־מָוֶת מִיָּד כִּסְּתָה פָּנֶיהָ הַיָּפִים.
מִהֲרָה לֶאֱחֹז בִּקְצֵה הַשֻּׁלְחָן, כִּי יָרְאָה, פֶּן תִּפֹּל
אַרְצָה כִּי כֹחָהּ עֲזָבָהּ – וַתֶּחֱזַק וַתֵּשֶׁב עַל כִּסֵּא.
קָצְרוּ דִּבְרֵי הַמִּכְתָּב, עֶשֶׂר שׁוּרוֹת, לֹא יוֹתֵר,
אֶפֶס הַשּׁוּרוֹת הָאֵל מָה רַבּוֹת הִגִּידוּ לְהַזְּקֵנָה!

"The fortress of Peter and Paul,* imprisoned, waiting for the trial..."
"...A girl, a girl sitting in prison... Oh, Razele, Razele, my daughter!"...
The old woman felt some frightful thing, some overwhelming thing
Drawing near to step over her and to trample her,
And she had no energy or strength to save herself.
Her thoughts grew dim, faltered and expired,
Her eyes stared out and saw nothing...

The warm spring sun rose high and flooded with light
Field and forest and pasture; a ray stole in and caressed
The old woman's cheeks. She sits and hears
The boiling of the water in the pot: it steams, storms, rushes,
Raising up foam and mist, and the *levivot* are between the bubbles.

The Bells

(a ballad)

To the thunder of bells* a voice calls for blood!
Bom-Bom! Bom-Bom! Bom-Bom!
The town was stormed! Haidamaks*
Raped, slaughtered the folk! Everyone
Carried the booty in sacks.

„מְצוּדַת־פֶּטְרוּס־וּפַּבְלוּס אֲסוּרָה וּמְחַכָּה לַמִּשְׁפָּט”...
„נַעֲרָה יוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּתְּפִיסָה... הוֹי, רֵיזֶ׳לֶה, רֵיזֶ׳לֶה בִּתִּי!”...
חָשָׁה הַזְּקֵנָה, כִּי יֵשׁ נוֹרָא, וְאָיֹם וּמַבְהִיל
הוֹלֵךְ וְקָרֵב, וּבָא וְחוֹנֶה עָלֶיהָ לְרָמְסָהּ,
וְכֹחַ לָהּ אַיִן, וְאֵין דֵּי אוֹן לְהִנָּצֵל מִמֶּנּוּ,
הוֹלְכוֹת מַחְשְׁבוֹתֶיהָ וְכָלוֹת, לְקוּיוֹת וְכֵהוֹת,
נִכְחָהּ הִבִּיטוּ עֵינֶיהָ – וּמְאוּמָה לֹא רָאֲתָה נֶגְדָּהּ...

וְשֶׁמֶשׁ הָאָבִיב הַחַם הִתְרוֹמֵם וַיָּצֶף בְּאוֹרוֹת
שָׂדֶה וָיַעַר וָכָר, וְקֶרֶן הִתְגַּנְּבָה – וּמְלַטְּפָה
לְחָיֵי הַזְּקֵנָה. וְהִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת, מַבִּיטָה וְשׁוֹמַעַת
רְתִיחַת הַמַּיִם בַּסִּיר, שֶׁקּוֹדְחִים, וְרוֹעֲשִׁים וְסוֹעֲרִים,
מַעֲלִים קֶצֶף וָאֵד, וּלְבִיבוֹת בֵּין הַבִּעְבּוּעִים...

הַפַּעֲמוֹנִים

(בלדה)

אֶל רַעַם פַּעֲמוֹנִים – קוֹל קוֹרֵא לְדָם.
בָּם־בָּם! בָּם־בָּם! בָּם־בָּם! –
הָבְקְעָה הָעִיר! הַיְדַּמַּקִים
הִכְרִיעוּ לְטֶבַח הַקְּהִלָּה – הָעָם
נָשָׂא הַבִּזָּה בְּשַׂקִּים.

Two days corpses rolled in the town,
On the third, they threw them in a hole:
They fouled the synagogue (with feces of swine
They filthied each Torah scroll)*
Over it they built a steeple white and tall,
A choir of bells they hung there,
When the priest rose to prayer
They would answer him:
Bim-Bom! Bim-Bom!

One of the "Thirty-Six Just"* heard,
Alone on an autumn night he appeared:
He came, said the prayer for the dead.*
"Be magnified, be sanctified!"....
But finishing — there was no one,
Not a man, only the night asleep —
Groaned the big bell in the tall steeple
And the small bells answered then
"Amen!
Amen! Amen!"

The priest heard, he hurried there,
Crowd upon crowds came to the site,
The Metropolitan and Archimandrite
Sprinkled holy water, sang loud in the air

יוֹמַיִם הִתְגּוֹלְלוּ הַפְּגָרִים בָּעִיר,
בַּשְּׁלִישִׁי הִשְׁלִיכוּם הַבּוֹרָה;
וַיְחַלְּלוּ הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (בְּצוֹאַת־חֲזִיר
טִמְּאוּ כָּל סִפְרֵי־הַתּוֹרָה),
וּמִגְדָּל לוֹ בָּנוּ לָבָן וָרָם,
וַיִּתְּנוּ בוֹ קְהַל־פַּעֲמוֹנִים.
וְהָיָה בְּהִתְפַּלֵּל הַכֹּמֶר הַקָּם,
וְהָיוּ לוֹ עוֹנִים:
בִּים־בָּם! בִּים־בָּם!

וַיִּשְׁמַע הָאֶחָד מִלָּמֶד־הַוָּא״ו,
וַיָּבוֹא יְחִידִי בַּלַּיְלָה וּסְתָו,
וַיָּבוֹא וַיֹּאמֶר הַ„קַדִּישׁ״:
„יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ...״
וַיְהִי כְּכַלּוֹתוֹ – וְאִתּוֹ שָׁם אֵין
מֵאָדָם גַּם אִישׁ, אַךְ הַלַּיְלָה הַנָּם, –
וַיִּנְהֹם הַפַּעֲמוֹן בַּמִּגְדָּל הָרָם,
וַתַּעֲנֶינָה הַמְּצִלּוֹת גַּם הֵן:
„אָמֵן!
אָמֵן וְאָמֵן!

וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכֹּמֶר – הִזְדָּרֵז לְשָׁם,
הִתְקַבְּצוּ הֲמוֹנִים הֲמוֹנִים,
בָּא הֶגְמוֹן וְאַרְכִיהֶגְמוֹנִים.
וַיַּזּוּ מֵי קֹדֶשׁ, שָׁרוּ בְּקוֹל רָם

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To set the fault in the bells aright.
In the high steeple the bell responds
And the carillon,
In splendor and charm
Bim-Bom! Bim-Bom!

But during the watch of the midnight hour*
The sign is renewed:
Again groans the bell in the steeple
Sighs the carillon too
With a ringing of grace, with a ringing of pain,
"Amen!
Amen! Amen!"

They Say There Is a Country

They say there is a country
A land that flows with sunlight.
Where is that country?
Where is that sunlight?

They say there is a country
Where seven pillars* are.
There bloom on every hilltop
Seven wandering stars.*

לְתַקֵּן אֶת פְּגַם־הַפַּעֲמוֹנִים.
וַיַּעַן הַפַּעֲמוֹן בַּמִּגְדָּל הָרָם,
וְהַמְּצִלּוֹת גַּם הֵן
בְּהָדָר וָחֵן:
בִּים־בָּם! בִּים־בָּם!

וְאוּלָם בַּלַּיְלָה עִם תִּקּוּן חֲצוֹת
הִתְחַדֵּשׁ הָאוֹת:
שׁוּב נֶאֱנַח הַפַּעֲמוֹן בַּמִּגְדָּל הָרָם
הַמְּצִלּוֹת נֶאֱנָחוֹת גַּם הֵן
בְּצִלְצוּל־יְגוֹנִים, בְּצִלְצוּל שֶׁל חֵן
„אָמֵן!
אָמֵן וְאָמֵן!"

אוֹמְרִים יֶשְׁנָה אֶרֶץ...

אוֹמְרִים: יֶשְׁנָה אֶרֶץ,
אֶרֶץ רְוַת שֶׁמֶשׁ...
אַיֵּה אוֹתָהּ אֶרֶץ?
אֵיפֹה אוֹתוֹ שֶׁמֶשׁ?

אוֹמְרִים: יֶשְׁנָה אֶרֶץ
עַמּוּדֶיהָ שִׁבְעָה,
שִׁבְעָה כּוֹכְבֵי־לֶכֶת
צָצִים עַל כָּל גִּבְעָה.

A land where is fulfilled
All a man can hope,
Everyone who enters —
Akiba* does approach.

"Shalom to you, Akiba,
Peace be with you, Rábbi.
Where are they, the Holy,
Where are the Maccábee?"*

Answers him Akiba,
Says to him the Rábbi:
"All Israel is holy,
You are the Maccábee!"

אֶרֶץ – בָּהּ יְקֻיַּם
כָּל אֲשֶׁר אִישׁ קִוָּה,
נִכְנַס כָּל הַנִּכְנָס –
פָּגַע בּוֹ עֲקִיבָא.

„שָׁלוֹם לְךָ, עֲקִיבָא!
שָׁלוֹם לְךָ, רַבִּי!
אֵיפֹה הֵם הַקְּדוֹשִׁים,
אֵיפֹה הַמַּכַּבִּי?”

עוֹנֶה לוֹ עֲקִיבָא,
אוֹמֵר לוֹ הָרַבִּי:
„כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשִׁים,
אַתָּה הַמַּכַּבִּי!”

II

The Generation of Bialik and Tchernichovsky

הדור של ביאליק וטשרניחובסקי

Tirzah

Day after day as the day sets,
    And the sun's heat is waning,
There walks Tirzah, lovely faun,
    Into the garden singing.

Day after day as day sets —
    To listen to her singing,
A cherub descends from the skies
    To the garden winging.

In mysterious quiet all is wrapped,
    The shadow spreading thickens —
And Tirzah singing, still sings on,
    And still the cherub listens.

Then as a sudden tremor moves
    Through leaves of tree about her,
Tirzah a slight moment shudders,
    Stares expectantly behind her.

But nothing whatever does she see,
    Completely unaware,
Confident she sings again
    For the cherub's listening ear.

תִּרְצָה

כָּל יוֹם וָיוֹם בִּפְנוֹת הַיּוֹם,
    כִּי יֵרֶף לַהַט חֶרֶס,
לָהּ יוֹצֵאת תִּרְצָה, יַעֲלַת־תֹּם,
    הַגִּנָּה וּמְשׁוֹרֶרֶת.

כָּל יוֹם וָיוֹם בִּפְנוֹת הַיּוֹם –
    לִשְׁמוֹעַ אֶל הָרִנָּה,
אָז יֵרֵד כְּרוּב מִשְּׁמֵי־הָרוֹם
    וּבָא אֱלֵי הַגִּנָּה.

הַכֹּל כְּבָר עוֹטֶה דְּמִי וָסוֹד,
    וְעַב־צֵל מִשְׂתָּרֵעַ –
וְתִרְצָה שָׁרָה, שָׁרָה עוֹד,
    וְעוֹד הַכְּרוּב שׁוֹמֵעַ.

וּבַחֲלוֹף פִּתְאֹם זִיו כִּמְעַט
    בֵּין טַרְפֵי־עֵץ סְבִיבֶיהָ –
וְחָרְדָה תִּרְצָה רֶגַע קָט
    וְצָפְתָה לַאֲחוֹרֶיהָ.

אַךְ הִיא לֹא תֵרֶא שָׁם עַד־מָה
    וּמְאוּם אֵין הִיא יוֹדַעַת –
וְהָלְאָה בֶּטַח תָּשִׁיר לָהּ,
    וְאֹזֶן כְּרוּב שׁוֹמַעַת.

Afternoon Light

Drink deep, my heart, of brightest noon,
But trust not its tranquillity!
Quietly, in the blue light, lurk
Mourning winds one cannot see.

Treacherous is the afternoon rest.
Do not trust it when it comes.
A bright canopy is woven slowly
By a hidden hand over horror's depths.

Dreams of purest white
Dig, for something, a grave:
You awake — their song stills:
Their gold tarnishes, their light pales.

Do not believe in the light of afternoon
Nor in its deceiving rest.
Sure is one hour, one hour alone,
Faithful in its distress.

This is the muted evening hour —
Lingering always in the day's edge.
It will not fail, believe in it.
Walk erect to meet it.

אוֹר צָהֳרַיִם

רְוֵה לְבָבִי, זִיו צָהֳרַיִם,
אַךְ אַל תַּאֲמֵן בְּמַרְגּוֹעָם!
חֶרֶשׁ אוֹרְבִים בְּאוֹר הַתְּכֵלֶת
רוּחוֹת אֵבֶל וְאֵין רוֹאָם.

בֹּגְדָה מְנוּחַת צָהֳרַיִם.
אַל נָא תִבְטַח בָּהּ, אִם בָּאָה.
יָד נִסְתֶּרֶת אַט שׁוֹזֶרֶת
חֻפַּת־אוֹר עַל תְּהוֹמוֹת־זְוָעָה.

וַחֲלוֹמוֹת־לֹבֶן זַכִּים
כּוֹרִים קֶבֶר לְאֵיזֶה דָבָר;
וַהֲקִיצוֹתָ – נָדַם שִׁירָם;
זְהָבָם הוּעַם וְאוֹרָם חָוָר.

אַל תַּאֲמִינָה בְּאוֹר צָהֳרַיִם
וּמְנוּחָתָם הַכּוֹזֵבָה; –
שָׁעָה אַחַת, שְׁעַת בִּטָּחוֹן,
יֵשׁ נֶאֱמָנָה וַעֲצֵבָה.

שְׁעַת הָעֶרֶב הִיא הַדְּמוּמָה –
בְּשׁוּלֵי יוֹם הִיא תָּמִיד שׁוֹהָה.
הִיא לֹא תְכַזֵּב. בָּהּ רַק תַּאֲמִין.
וְשֶׁפִי תֵּלֵךְ לִקְרַאת בֹּאָהּ.

In the light of day, in the golden white
That it come, my heart, await!

Midnight

A tarrying moon still drips the redness of her blood
And the peaceful night grasses
Lean their little heads on each other
Dozing, hands under their cheeks,
In her tranquil light.
In the narrow lane a tired wayfarer kneels
And a horse in the meadow raises his head amazed.

Then someone stretches His hand over the world
And all motionless congeals beneath Him.
Like russet copper, light, mysteriously strange
Hangs over the earth grown dim.
From his chariot a star glides and in its lair
The sea lion mutely licks its paw.
No nurseling whimpers then, the cusp upon its branch
Holds its breath —
Only Chaos, a ravaging beast from its ambush,
Stretches out at the world's edge gaping his maw.
There is no rising and no setting at this hour.

בְּאוֹר הַיּוֹם וּבְלֹבֶן זְהָבוֹ
צַפֵּה, לִבִּי, לָהּ כִּי תָבֹא!

חֲצוֹת

סַהַר מְאַחֵר רוֹעֵף עוֹד אֹדֶם דָּמוֹ
וְדִשְׁאֵי לֵיל שַׁאֲנַנִּים
זֶה עַל זֶה הִטּוּ רָאשֵׁיהֶם הַקְּטַנִּים
וּמְנַמְנְמִים, יְדֵיהֶם תַּחַת לְחָיָם,
בְּאוֹרוֹ הָרוֹגֵעַ.
בְּמֵצַר שָׂדֶה כָּרַע הֵלֶךְ עָיֵף
וְסוּס בְּאָחוּ יָרִים רֹאשׁ תָּמֵהַּ.

אָז אֶחָד יֵט יָדֵהוּ עַל הָעוֹלָם
וְהַכֹּל יִקְרַשׁ תַּחְתָּיו מִבְּלִי נוֹעַ.
אוֹר פֶּלְאִי זָר, כִּנְחֹשֶׁת אֲדַמְדַּמָּה,
יִתָּלֶה עַל הָאָרֶץ שֶׁהוּעֲמָה.
מֵרִכְבּוֹ יִצְנַח כּוֹכָב, וְעַל רִבְצוֹ
אֲרִי־הַיָּם כַּפּוֹתָיו יָלֹק אִלֵּם.
לֹא יִפְעֶה יוֹנֵק אָז, וְאֵב עַל עַנְפּוֹ
אֶת נְשִׁימָתוֹ יִכְלָא — —
רַק תֹּהוּ, כִּפְרִיץ־חַיּוֹת, מִמַּאֲרָבוֹ
יִתְמוֹדֵד בִּקְצֵה עוֹלָם, יִפְעַר לוֹעַ.
וְאֵין בְּשָׁעָה זוֹ לָקוּם וְאֵין לִשְׁקֹעַ.

There is one hour no man awaits:
The hour of final watch,
As the Nile hippopotamus, when darkness presses
And the universe is hidden from its lord,
Kneels down powerless upon the lair of night,
There is no watchful eye or witness for this hour and its anguish
As ailing yesterday is gathered to its forefathers.

Then fruit ripens on the tree, and like a scarlet forest
The vision of the world burgeons at its head.

יֵשׁ שָׁעָה אַחַת, אִישׁ לָהּ לֹא יְחַכֶּה,
הֲלֹא הִיא שְׁעַת אַשְׁמוֹרָה אַחֲרוֹנָה,
כַּבְּהֵמוֹת עַל יְאוֹר כִּי תִכְבַּד הָאֲפֵלָה,
וְתֵבֵל, נֶעֱלָמָה מֵאֲדוֹנָהּ,
כּוֹרַעַת מִבְּלִי אוֹן עַל מִרְבַּץ־לֵילָה.
אֵין עַיִן צוֹפָה וְעֵד לְשָׁעָה זה וִיגוֹנָהּ
בְּהֵאָסֵף תְּמוֹל נָגוּעַ אֶל אֲבוֹתָיו.

אָז יְבַשֵּׁל פְּרִי עַל עֵץ, וּכְיַעַר אָדֹם
חֲזוֹן הָעוֹלָם יָנוּב לִמְרַאֲשׁוֹתָיו.

The Flower Pot

There is an ancient forest, its giant trees
Support the skies;
And there is a clay pot; in it grows
A common flower.

On the window sill of a shabby hut
It quietly grows.
Each day to the flower pot an old woman comes,
She waters the bloom.

Her hand trembles, her back is bent with age,
Heavy the pitcher weighs:
Yet how she loves the plant, bends over it,
Washes its leaves.

Once I saw the old one
Watering her flower —
Suddenly as an eternal forest this lowly bud
Grew, spread.

Like the eternal forest, God's eye attends it
Day and night
Quenching its thirst from full deep and high domain
With streams, dew, rain.

עָצִיץ

יֵשׁ יַעַר עַד, עֵצָיו הָעֲנָקִים
תּוֹמְכִים שְׁחָקִים;
וְיֵשׁ עָצִיץ שֶׁל חֶרֶס, בּוֹ יְגַדֵּל
רַק פֶּרַח דַּל.

עַל אֶדֶן שֶׁל אֶשְׁנָב, בְּאֹהֶל מָט
יִפְרַח בַּלָּאט;
יוֹם יוֹם זְקֵנָה תִּגַּשׁ אֶל הָעָצִיץ,
תַּשְׁקֶה הַצִּיץ.

הַגַּב מְזֹקָן שַׁח, הַיָּד תִּרְעַד,
כָּבֵד הַכַּד;
אַךְ מַה תְּרַחֵם הַשְּׁתִיל, תִּכֹּף עָלָיו,
תִּרְחַץ עָלָיו.

וְיֵשׁ שֶׁבִּרְאוֹתִי אֶת הַסָּבָה
פִּרְחָהּ מַרְוָה –
פִּתְאֹם כְּיַעַר־עַד יִשְׂגֶּה, יִצְמַח
הַצִּיץ הַמָּךְ.

כְּיַעַר עַד, עָלָיו פְּקוּחָה־עֵין אֵל
יוֹמָם וָלֵיל
לִשְׁבּוֹר צְמָאוֹ בְּשֶׁפַע תְּהוֹם וָעָל:
פְּלָגִים, גְּשָׁמִים וָטָל...

Gleaning

Silence and aura. An ancient Yemenite woman gathers dry
branches for a bonfire,
Her bent back between the green of grapevines darkens and
gleams in harvest sheens.
Her dusky grandson with curly earlocks caught in mid-air in
the branches of fig.
A slice of black bread between his teeth and his nimble fingers
pick the last of the fruit.
A bird burst out of the fig thicket, chirped suddenly in
the quiet world,
Dropped to warm earth and pecked the bread crumbs fallen below.
I too have joined the gleaners, silently as I lie on the
vineyard hill:
I will furtively glean myself remnants of summer, sheens of
harvest: delicate, serene…

At Times Spirit Surges

At times spirit surges up from bodies' prison,
Flooding matter, overflowing their bounds.
Then comes the end of all flesh, only spirit pure and naked,
Only soul to soul utters word without sound.

לֶקֶט

דְּמָמָה וּנְהָרָה. תֵּימָנִית יְשִׁישָׁה מְקוֹשְׁשָׁה
שׁוֹכוֹת יְבֵשׁוֹת לִבְעֵרָה,
גַּבָּהּ הַכָּפוּף בֵּין יֶרֶק הַגְּפָנִים מַשְׁחִיר
וּמַבְהִיק בְּזָהֳרֵי־הַבָּצִיר.
נֶכְדָּהּ הַשְׁחַרְחַר עִם פְּאוֹת־תַּלְתַּלִּים נֶאֱחָז
בָּאֲוִיר בְּסִבְכֵי הַתְּאֵנָה,
פְּרוּסַת פַּת־קֵיבָר בְּשִׁנָּיו, וְקוֹטְפוֹת יָדָיו
הַזְּרִיזוֹת אַחֲרוֹנֵי הַפֵּרוֹת.
צִפּוֹר הִתְפָּרְצָה מִמַּעֲבֵה הַתְּאֵנָה, צִפְצְפָה
פִּתְאֹם בְּשֶׁקֶט הָעוֹלָם,
יָרְדָה לָאָרֶץ הַחַמָּה וְנִקְּרָה פְּתוֹתֵי הַלֶּחֶם שֶׁנָּפְלוּ לְמָטָּה.
אַף גַּם אָנֹכִי נִלְוֵיתִי לַמְלַקְּטִים, דּוּמָם
בְּשָׁכְבִי עַל גִּבְעַת הַכֶּרֶם:
שְׂרִידֵי הַקַּיִץ לִי אֲלַקֳּטָה חֶרֶשׁ, זָהֳרֵי
הַבָּצִיר הָרַכִּים, הַשְּׁלֵוִים...

וְיֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָרוּח

וְיֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָרוּחַ מִשְּׁבִי הַגּוּפִים יָרוּם
וְעָבַר עַל גְּדוֹתֵיהֶם וְהֵצִיף אֶת הַחֹמֶר;
אָז יָבוֹא קֵץ כָּל בָּשָׂר, רַק רוּחַ זַךְ וְעֵירֹם,
רַק נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֵי נֶפֶשׁ בְּלִי קוֹל תַּבִּיעַ אֹמֶר.

And that stone in the field, muted and lowly,
No longer is field-stone — it is the spirit of acquiescence,
The creative understanding locked within its core
Gazes out from deep within to the edges of silence.

And this mule thigh bending low under burden
— How it glistens with sweat, how the thigh quivers —
Why, this is sadness, melancholy of duress
That creates and destroys, that binds and shatters.

Into space, the infant napping in his cradle
Stretches out the tiny tip of his foot in innocence —
Do you hear how round about angels lifted their voices
In sacred song of Creation, in pure melody's merriment?

And there a tree soars upward in a glow of sunset rays,
That into its verdant tangle drips the essence of their blood,
Lucent, tremulous hues gushing
Dusky green and rose, purple and gold —

And suddenly the tree fades.... Only anguished muteness blazes,
Only tender love whispers, only compassion's cry
Quivers there, against a flickering heaven yearning soars
To a beauty that has vanished, to a beauty not yet arrived.

וְאֶבֶן זוֹ בַּשָּׂדֶה הָאִלְּמָה וְהַשְּׁחוֹחָה
שׁוּב אֵינָהּ אֶבֶן שָׂדֶה – הִיא רוּחַ הַהַשְׁלָמָה,
הַבִּינָה הָעִילָּאִית הַסְּגוּרָה בְּתוֹךְ תּוֹכָהּ
וְצוֹפָה מִתּוֹךְ תּוֹכָהּ לְיַרְכְּתֵי הַדְּמָמָה.

וְיָרֵךְ זוֹ שֶׁל פֶּרֶד מִמַּשָּׂא מִשְׁתַּטֵּחַ
– מַה נּוֹצְצָה מִזֵּעָה, מָה רוֹטְטָה הַיָּרֵךְ –
הֲלֹא זֶה הָעִצָּבוֹן, זוֹ תּוּגַת הַהֶכְרֵחַ
הַבּוֹרֵא וְהַמַּחֲרִיב, הַמְחַבֵּשׁ וְהַמְפָרֵךְ.

וּקְצֵה כַּף רֶגֶל זְעִירָה לְתוֹךְ חֲלַל הָעוֹלָם
לְתֻמּוֹ הוֹשִׁיט תִּינוֹק מְנַמְנֵם בָּעֲרִיסָה –
הֲתַקְשִׁיב אֵיךְ מִסָּבִיב מַלְאָכִים נָתְנוּ קוֹלָם
בְּשִׁיר־בְּרֵאשִׁית קָדוֹשׁ, בִּנְגִינַת־תֹּם מַעֲלִיסָה?

וְעֵץ אֶל עָל מִתַּמֵּר לְנֹגַהּ קַרְנֵי שְׁקִיעָה,
אֶל תּוֹךְ הַסְּבָךְ הָרַעֲנָן נוֹטֶפֶת תַּמְצִית דָּמָן,
וְכֻלּוֹ שְׁקוּף־רוֹטֵט בְּשִׁפְעַת גַּוְנֵי פְּלִיאָה
אַפְלוּלֵי־יָרֹק־וָרֹד וְזָהָב וְאַרְגָּמָן –

וּפִתְאֹם גָּז הָאִילָן... רַק יִלְהַט אֵלֶם־יָגוֹן,
רַק עֶדְנַת־אַהֲבָה תֶּהֱמֶה, בְּכִי־חֶמְלָה יִרְעַד רָעֹד,
וּמוּל רָקִיעַ דּוֹעֵךְ מִתַּמֵּר הָעֶרְגּוֹן
אֶל יֹפִי שֶׁנִּסְתַּלֵּק, אֶל יֹפִי שֶׁלֹּא בָּא עוֹד...

The Middle Ages Draw Near!*

The Middle Ages draw near. Do you hear, sensitive man, do you feel
The whisper of crawling dust, the distant smell of sulphur?
That unseen pressure in the air, the heart and the land,
As during an eclipse; when houses silver and tremble,
And the blue sky turns lead, and cows low in panic,
And grasses and trees silver like greens sprouting in a cellar,
And the faces of men are frozen and strange like wax masks? —
From medieval oblivion returns the ancient mist,
As all streams return to the sea and the sun to the western clouds.
The ancient wheel revolves with the old rusty creaking.
The flow of blood budged it as a bursting flood surprises
The wheel of a desolate mill, haunt of ravens and demons,
But its axle is not wet enough, it creaks and curses dryly,
And the dust of its ancient victims billows from its cracked teeth.
The Gothic murk rises in flame and terrors on the horizon;
So has it always been. Thus fate returns to us
After every spring-like tiding seven storms and snows.
The conquering nations inherited the traits of their land and sun:
Day and darkness, summer and winter, returning, returning to the start.

Love, hatred, honesty, deceit.... And so it is forever;
Mighty is the approaching winter for summer tarried in the land —
The Middle Ages draw near!

יְמֵי־הַבֵּינַיִם מִתְקָרְבִים!...

יְמֵי־הַבֵּינַיִם מִתְקָרְבִים. הֲתַקְשִׁיב, הֲתָחוּשׁ, אִישׁ־נֶפֶשׁ,
אֶת רַחַשׁ הָאָבָק הַזּוֹחֵל, אֶת רֵיחַ־הַגָּפְרִית הָרָחוֹק? –
וְאוֹתָהּ מוּעָקָה נֶעֱלָמָה בָּאֲוִיר, בַּלֵּב וּבָאָרֶץ,
כְּמוֹ בִשְׁעַת לִקּוּי־הַחַמָּה; עֵת בָּתִּים מַאֲפִירִים וְרוֹפְפִים,
וְעֵין שְׁמֵי־הַתְּכֵלֶת – עוֹפֶרֶת, וְגוֹעוֹת הַפָּרוֹת מִפַּחַד,
וּדְשָׁאִים וְעֵצִים מַכְסִיפִים כַּיֶּרֶק שֶׁעָלָה בַּמַּרְתֵּף,
וּקְפוּאִים פְּנֵי אָדָם וְזָרִים כְּמַסְווֹת הַדּוֹנַג? –
זֶה שָׁב הָעֲרָפֶל הַקָּדוּם מִנְּשִׁיַּת יְמֵי הַבֵּינַיִם,
כְּשׁוּב כָּל הַנְּחָלִים לַיָּם וְהַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְעַנְנֵי־מַעֲרָב.
חוֹזֵר הַגַּלְגַּל הָעַתִּיק בַּחֲרִיקַת חֲלוּדָה יְשָׁנָה,
שֶׁטֶף הַדָּם זַעֲזָעָהוּ, כְּפֶרֶץ־יְאוֹר הַמַּפְתִּיעַ
אֶת גַּלְגַּל הַטַּחֲנָה שְׁמֵמָה – מִשְׁכָּן לְעוֹרְבִים וּלְשֵׁדִים;
אַךְ צִירוֹ לֹא רָטַב עוֹד דַּיּוֹ וְהוּא חוֹרֵק וּמְקַלֵּל מֵחֹרֶב
וַאֲבַק קָרְבְּנוֹתָיו הַקְּדוּמִים מִתַּמֵּר מִשִּׁנָּיו הַסְּדוּקוֹת.
עוֹלָה אֲפֵלַת־הַגּוֹתִים בְּאֵשׁ וּבְמוֹרָאוֹת בָּאֹפֶק;
כֹּה הָיָה מֵעוֹלָם, כֹּה חָזַר הַגּוֹרָל אֵלֵינוּ,
אַחֲרֵי כָל בְּשׂוֹרָה אֲבִיבִית שֶׁבַע סְעָרוֹת וָשֶׁלֶג.
יָרְשׁוּ הָעַמִּים הַמְנַצְּחִים אֶת סְגֻלּוֹת אַדְמָתָם לְשִׁמְשָׁם:
יוֹם וַחֲשֵׁכָה וְקַיִץ וָחֹרֶף וְחוֹזֵר וְחוֹזֵר חֲלִילָה;

אַהֲבָה, מַשְׂטֵמָה, תָּם־לֵב וְעַרְמוּמִית... וְכָכָה עַד עוֹלָם;
עַז הוּא הַחֹרֶף הַקָּרֵב, כִּי אָרַךְ הַקַּיִץ בָּאָרֶץ, –
יְמֵי־הַבֵּינַיִם מִתְקָרְבִים!

Like a cloud twisting in the distance. Open wide your eyes and ears, ancient people!
The wheel is… the turning wheel: and a wild wind before it
Skitters grotesque capers in the dust that crouches
On the paths of the old worlds.…
Do not stand in its perverse way, do not run with it,
You be the axle and you also be the wheel! —
Your role has not been played yet, Eternal People, the play has not yet come to its end,

The heavy curtain is not lowered, myriad eyes are lifted yet
To you and the lofty drama, eyes of foe and lover alike.
If peoples whistle, envious, let your spirit not falter,
You must know — even their uncircumcised hearts still yearn in secret
For the end of the lofty drama prolonged before them thousands of years.
You must still go on. Go on. You will appear on the stage of the world
And your warm and mighty voice must split the whistling of the gentiles —
Until they grow mute, shaken and pale at the sight of surging courage,
Of your fiery spirit, as you conclude the play of world history:
Until they hide their confused faces in trembling hands,
Kneel, bellow in weeping, the weeping of generations confessing their sin…
Then you shall command the lowering of the curtain, to calm your stormy spirit
And to remain alone with your victory, before the world shall pass
Into the time of the great brotherhood and to the God the prophets did not imagine,

To the life the poets did not dream … prepare for the mighty drama —
New days of transition draw near!

כְּעֵין עָנָן מִתְאַבֵּךְ בַּמֶּרְחָק. פְּקַח עַיִן וָאֹזֶן, עַם עַתִּיק!
הַגַּלְגַּל הוּא... גַּלְגַּל הַחוֹזֵר; וְרוּחַ פָּרוּעַ לְפָנָיו
מְכַרְכֵּר כִּרְכּוּרִים נִתְעָבִים בָּאָבָק הָרוֹבֵץ
בִּנְתִיבוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַיְשָׁנִים...
אַל־עֲמוֹד בְּדַרְכּוֹ הַנְּלוֹזָה וְאַל אִתּוֹ יַחַד תָּרוּצוּ,
הֱיוּ אַתֶּם הַצִּיר וְאַתֶּם הֱיוּ גַּם הַגַּלְגַּל! – – –
עוֹד לֹא נִמְלָא תַּפְקִידְךָ, עַם עוֹלָם, הַמַּחֲזֶה לֹא בָא עוֹד
אֶל קִצּוֹ,

הַמָּסָךְ הַכָּבֵד לֹא הוּרַד, עוֹד רִבְבוֹת עַיִן נְשׂוּאוֹת
אֵלֶיךָ וְאֶל גַּב־הַחִזָּיוֹן, עֵינֵי אוֹיְבִים וְאוֹהֲבִים יָחַד.
וְאִם יִשְׁרְקוּ עַמִּים וּמְקַנְּאִים אַל יִפֹּל רוּחֲךָ,
וְיָדַעְתָּ – לְבָבָם הֶעָרֵל אַף הוּא עוֹד יְצַפֶּה בַּסֵּתֶר
לְסוֹף הַחִזָּיוֹן הַנַּעֲלֶה, הַנִּמְשָׁךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם שְׁנוֹת אֶלֶף.
עָלֶיךָ עוֹד לָצֵאת. עוֹד תֵּצֵא. עַל בָּמַת הָעוֹלָם תּוֹפִיעַ
וְקוֹלְךָ הַחַם וְהָאַדִּיר יְבַקַּע אֶת שְׁרִיקוֹת הַגּוֹיִם, –
עַד יֵאָלְמוּ נִדְהָמִים וְחִוְּרִים לְמַרְאֵה הָעֹז הַבּוֹקֵעַ
וְלַהַט־רוּחֲךָ, כְּהַתְמְךָ אֶת מַחֲזֵה תּוֹלְדוֹת־הָעַמִּים;
עַד יַסְתִּירוּ אֶת פְּנֵיהֶם הַנְּבוֹכִים בְּיָדַיִם חֲרֵדוֹת,
וְכָרְעוּ וְגָעוּ בִּבְכִיָּה, בְּכִי דוֹרוֹת מִתְוַדִּים עַל חֶטְאָם...
אָז תְּצַוֶּה לְהוֹרִיד הַמָּסָךְ, לְהַרְגִּיעַ רוּחֲךָ הַנִּסְעָר
וּלְהִשָּׁאֵר לְבַד עִם נִצְחוֹנְךָ, בְּטֶרֶם עֲבֹר כָּל הָעוֹלָם
לִתְקוּפַת הָאַחֲוָה הַגְּדוֹלָה וְלֵאלֹהִים לֹא שְׁעָרוּם הַנְּבִיאִים

וּלְחַיִּים לֹא חֲלָמוּם מְשׁוֹרְרִים... הִכּוֹנָה לַמַּחֲזֶה הָאַדִּיר, –
יְמֵי־מַעֲבָר חֲדָשִׁים מִתְקָרְבִים!

Song of the Snow

Oh, who crumbles up the heavens!
Here they fall in crumbs, in crumbs,
And the streets are merged — Be blessed
Who makes the changing seasons come!

There were fields — tell us where?
There were gardens — where are they?
Everything is white, white, white,
All colors hide themselves away.

Laughter, snow on every face.
Shadows — the sleighs go past;
In confusion of pure feathers
Melting are the steeple tops.

Snow is swirling — In his dance
Swept away is one black bird;
Kra-Kra-Kra… Oh raven, raven,
Everything is pure, is pure! . . .

שִׁירַת שֶׁלֶג

הוֹי, מִי פּוֹרֵר אֶת הַשַּׁחַק!
הִנֵּה יִפֹּל פִּתִּים פִּתִּים;
וּמִתְבּוֹלְלִים הָרְחוֹבוֹת –
בָּרוּךְ מַחֲלִיף אֶת הָעִתִּים!

שָׂדוֹת הָיוּ – אִמְרוּ אַיָּם?
גַּנִּים עָמְדוּ – אָנָה בָּאוּ?
הַכֹּל לָבָן, לָבָן, לָבָן,
כָּל הַצְּבָעִים הִתְחַבָּאוּ.

צְחוֹק וְשֶׁלֶג עַל כָּל פָּנִים.
עוֹבְרוֹת עֶגְלוֹת־חֹרֶף – צְלָלִים;
וּבְעִרְבּוּבְיַת נוֹצוֹת צַחוֹת
נְמוֹגִים רָאשֵׁי הַמִּגְדָּלִים.

סוֹבֵב שֶׁלֶג – וּבִמְחוֹלוֹ
נִסְחָף עוֹרֵב אֶחָד שָׁחוֹר;
קְרַע־קְרַע־קְרַע... הוֹי עוֹרֵב, עוֹרֵב,
הַכֹּל צָחוֹר, הַכֹּל צָחוֹר!...

But should extinction be decreed upon all,
The light not shine after its setting, should the cruel wheel grasp you
To grind you in its teeth forever and grease its axle with your blood —
Should the nations make a murderous covenant to drag you into their savage way,
And not allow you to walk alone and complete your drama on this earth —
Then what is peace to you? Hasten the twilight of the world!
Grasp the turning wheel, cling to it tooth and nail,
As a leopard clings to the wild ox who would stab him with its horns.
And you shall be the terrible acid that destroys the solid iron,
And you shall take vengeance from the dark wheel for your shame and your father's shame.
Pierce it, devour it completely until its mighty links burst
And all the worn teeth fall with a cracking, angry shriek
And only its twisted axle remains revolving even after its destruction
Between mounds of ruins, idols, fences and shattered crowns.
And you shall dance around it in a circle the last cruel dance of freedom,
The last pure human beings around the deserted axle of abomination.
Enough, the martyr's death that leaves the earth to the unclean!
Die you shall, the death of all the creators that alter and perish on the earth
For the sake of the new, that rises pure with the mystery of Creation in its eyes.
Cease to be among the martyrs, learn to be heroes —
The Middle Ages draw near!

אַךְ אִם נִגְזְרָה כְּלָיָה עַל הַכֹּל,
וְלֹא יָאִיר הָאוֹר אַחֲרֵי שָׁקְעוֹ וּגְרָפְכֶם הַגַּלְגַּל הָאַכְזָר
לְטַחֲנְכֶם בְּשִׁנָּיו לָנֶצַח וּלְהַשְׁמִין אֶת צִירוֹ מִדִּמְכֶם, –
וְכָרְתוּ בְרִית־רֶצַח הָעַמִּים לְסַחֲבְכֶם אֶל פִּרְאֵי דַרְכֵיהֶם,
לְלֹא תֵת לָכֶם לֶכֶת לְבַדְּכֶם וּלְכַלּוֹת חֶזְיוֹנְכֶם בָּאָרֶץ, –
אָז מַה־לָּכֶם כֻּלְּכֶם וּלְשָׁלוֹם? הָחִישׁוּ אֶת שְׁקִיעַת הָעוֹלָם!
הֶאָחֲזוּ בַגַּלְגַּל הַחוֹזֵר בְּשֵׁן וּבְצִפֹּרֶן בּוֹ דִבְקוּ,
כַּנָּמֵר הַדָּבֵק בָּרְאֵם הַמִּתְרוֹצֵץ לְדָקְרוֹ בְּקַרְנָיו;
וִהְיִיתֶם כַּחֹמֶץ הַנּוֹרָא הַמַּשְׁחִית כָּל בַּרְזֶל וּמוּצָק,
וּנְקַמְתֶּם מִגַּלְגַּל הָאֹפֶל חֶרְפַּתְכֶם וְחֶרְפַּת הָאָבוֹת.
חֲדָרוּהוּ, אִכְלוּהוּ עַד כָּלָה וְיִתְפּוֹצְצוּ אַדִּירֵי־חֻלְיוֹתָיו,
וְנָשְׁרוּ כָּל שִׁנָּיו הַבָּלוֹת בַּחֲרִיקָה וּשְׁרִיקָה רוֹגֶזֶת,
עַד יִוָּתֵר רַק צִירוֹ הַמְעֻקָּל וְסוֹבֵב גַּם אַחֲרֵי חָרְבָּנוֹ,
בֵּין תִּלֵּי חֲרָבוֹת, אֱלִילִים וּגְדֵרִים וּכְתָרִים נְפוּצִים.
וּרְקַדְתֶּם סְבִיבוֹ בַּמַּעְגָּל מְחוֹל־חֹפֶשׁ אַכְזָרִי וְאַחֲרוֹן,
בְּנֵי־אָדָם אַחֲרוֹנִים וּטְהוֹרִים סְבִיב צִיר־הַתּוֹעֵבָה הַגַּלְמוּד...
רַב לָכֶם לָמוּת מוֹת קְדוֹשִׁים וַעֲזֹב הָעוֹלָם לִטְמֵאִים!
וּמַתֶּם כְּמוֹת כָּל הַיּוֹצְרִים הַמְכַלִּים וְכָלִים בָּאָרֶץ
לְמַעַן הֶחָדָשׁ הָעוֹלֶה וְתֹם וְסוֹד־בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּעֵינָיו!
חִדְלוּ לָכֶם מִן הַקְּדוֹשִׁים, לִמְדוּ הֱיוֹת לְגִבּוֹרִים –
יְמֵי־הַבֵּינַיִם מִתְקָרְבִים!

The Fruited Month*

1

The green nut tree —
Many-stemmed tangled, tender-leaved and supple —
Has burgeoned nut twins.
To every leaf and twig these twins cling:
Together in pairs and triplets,
Look, their tanned backsides peep out in derision
From chartreuse trousers and checkered green.
So topaz yellows out of greening bronze.
Oh, who will believe she is a mother, this lovely nut tree —
And her children are so numerous!
Slender arms like a girl, thick locks like a bride.
Still she preens, longs for the wind's wooing.
The sculptures of her foliage are two hues of green:
Pale grainy green — the underleaf,
Deep darkening green — the overleaf.
When the field-wind blows he ruffles and fondles,
And she fevers, she lusts, this mother — the nut tree
Every branch winks, hints, each leaf cajoles —
Now all of her flickers, now again she fades....

בְּיֶרַח־בּוּל

1

הָאֱגוֹזָה הַיְרֻקָּה –
רַבַּת־גֶּזַע וּפְרוּעָה, רַכַּת־עָלִים וּגְמִישָׁה, –
מְלֵאָה תְּאֳמֵי־אֱגוֹזִים.
אֶל כָּל עָלֶה וְזַלְזַל דָּבְקוּ אֵלֶּה הַתְּאוֹמִים;
כְּפוּלֵי־כְפוּלִים בְּיַחַד וּמְשֻׁלָּשִׁים כִּסְגוּלִים.
וַאֲחוֹרֵיהֶם הַשְּׁזוּפִים, שׁוּר, מְצִיצִים בְּלַעַג
מִתּוֹךְ מִכְנְסֵי־כַרְפַּס, מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁבְּצוֹת־יֶרֶק.
כָּכָה תַּצְהִיב הַפִּטְדָה מִתּוֹךְ בְּרוֹנְזָה נֶחֱלָדָה.
הוֹי, מִי יַאֲמִין, כִּי אֵם הִיא, זוֹ אֱגוֹזָה נֶחְמָדָה, –
וִילָדֶיהָ מָה רַבִּים!
דַּקַּת־זְרוֹעוֹת כְּיַלְדָּה, כְּבֵדַת־קְוֻצּוֹת כְּכַלָּה,
עוֹד תִּתְיַפֶּה אַף תַּעֲרֹג עַל חֲנֻפּוֹת הָרוּחַ...
לַחֲטוּבֵי טְרָפֶיהָ שְׁנַיִם גְּוָנִים יְרֻקִּים:
יֶרֶק חִוֵּר מְחֻסְפָּס פְּנֵי עָלֶיהָ מִלְּמַטָּה,
יֶרֶק עָמֹק וְקוֹדֵר – פְּנֵי הֶעָלִים מִלְמַעְלָה.
וּבִנְשֹׁב רוּחַ־שָׂדוֹת – הוּא הַמְעַלְעֵל וּמְסַלְסֵל,
וְלָהֲטָה וְעָגְבָה זוֹ הָאֵם – הָאֱגוֹזָה:
שׁוֹקֵר, רוֹמֵז כָּל עָנָף, קְרִיאוֹת־חֵן לְכָל עָלֶה; –
הִנֵּה הִבְהֲבָה כֻּלָּהּ, הִנֵּה שָׁבָה דָעֲכָה...

2

The melon's core fills with cold, sweet blood;
The heart fills with kernels — little black schemes.
He rounded his loins with plenty, bulged his belly with cunning,
Sunk his striped back into the gilded dust;
Lying supine, dozing in the sheen of the harvest sun —
Like an Arab, pampering himself on soft carpets,
Drawing, sucking juices from his green nargileh.*

Poppies

Once as it was morning and I was in the field,
The field was blazing with myriads of poppy bloom.
Like congealed cries of desire they burst from the earth,
Like lights of summer joys on stalks of festive green.

Fiery tongues in the green and the green is not consumed,*
And a morning wind blew rocking fiery tongues;
Poppy flames shimmered in clear crystal air
But sparks did not escape and no fine smoke.

Then I pushed through and stood fast in the flame meadow's navel,
Fire-tongues circled me and galloping waves of fire:
On my head burned the sun, at my feet flame-blossoms,
And, like gold white-heated, I was purified in the crucible.

2

דָּמִים קָרִים וּמְתוּקִים נִמְלָא תּוֹךְ אֲבַטִּיחַ;
לִבּוֹ נִמְלָא גַּרְעִינִים – מְזִמּוֹת קְטַנּוֹת, שְׁחַרְחָרוֹת.
עִגֵּל מָתְנָיו מִשֹּׂבַע, הִבְלִיט כְּרֵסוֹ בְּחָכְמָה,
שִׁקַּע גַּבּוֹ הַמְנֻמָּר תּוֹךְ הֶעָפָר הַמֻּזְהָב;
מֻטָּל פְּרַקְדָּן, מִתְנַמְנֵם לְנֹגַהּ שֶׁמֶשׁ הַבָּצִיר –
כַּעֲרָבִי מִתְפַּנֵּק עַל טַפִּיטָיו הָרַכִּים,
מוֹשֵׁךְ, מוֹצֵץ עֲסִיסִים בַּנַּרְגִּילָה הַיְרֻקָּה...

פְּרָגִים

וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹת הַבֹּקֶר וַאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה,
וְהַשָּׂדֶה כֻּלּוֹ בּוֹעֵר בְּרִבְבוֹת פִּרְחֵי־פְּרָג;
כְּצַעֲקוֹת־חֵשֶׁק קוֹפְאוֹת הִתְפָּרְצוּ מֵאֲדָמָה,
כְּאוּרֵי שְׂשׂוֹן־הַקַּיִץ בְּגִבְעוֹלֵי יֶרֶק־חָג.

לְשׁוֹנוֹת־אֵשׁ בַּיֶּרֶק וְהַיֶּרֶק אֵינוֹ אֻכָּל,
וְרוּחַ בֹּקֶר נָשַׁב וַיְנַעֲנַע לְשׁוֹנוֹת אֵשׁ;
וְלַהֲבוֹת פְּרָגִים נָעוּ בַּאֲוִיר זַךְ כִּבְדֹלַח,
וּרְשָׁפִים לֹא מִתְמַלְּטִים וְעָשָׁן קַל אֵין יֵשׁ.

אָז אֶחְתֹּר וָאֶתְיַצֵּב בְּטַבּוּר שְׂדֵה־שַׁלְהֶבֶת, –
וּלְשׁוֹנוֹת־אֵשׁ כִּתְּרוּנִי וְדַהֲרוֹת גַּלֵּי־נוּר;
עַל רֹאשִׁי בּוֹעֵר שֶׁמֶשׁ וּלְרַגְלַי פִּרְחֵי־לַהַב,
וַאֲנִי כְּזָהָב נִלְבַּן וְנִצְרַף תּוֹךְ הַכּוּר...

Passover in Jerusalem

Passionate angels serenaded today in Jerusalem —
Thousands of springs were concentrated in me today
And from its grave every dead skeleton breathes sun.
— Welcome fragrances, the crop-God's messengers,
I wait today, I wait this time
For the redeemer, the seducer — for whoever comes,
If only he comes:
Today is Passover and faith has no bounds.

Thousands of past kisses resound today in Jerusalem,
And the world begins to weep in God's choking provender
And from my ancestors' graves wells the song of blood.
— Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city of the arid and the prayer,
Today will you spread for me the warm nuptial couch,
For the kiss of the husband of your youth, bridegroom of blood,
Mourner of blood,
From under your heart, the King Messiah* to bear?

פֶּסַח בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם

מַלְאֲכֵי־עֲגָבִים זִמְּרוּ הַיּוֹם בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם –
אַלְפֵי אֲבִיבִים נִדְּחֲסוּ בִּי הַיּוֹם
וּמִקִּבְרוֹ יִנְשׁוֹם שֶׁמֶשׁ כָּל שֶׁלֶד מֵת.
– הֱיוּ בְּרוּכִים לִי רֵיחוֹת, שְׁלִיחֵי אֵל־הַיְבוּל,
מְחַכֶּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם, מְחַכֶּה אֲנִי כָּעֵת
לְמָשִׁיחַ, לְמַדִּיחַ – לְמִי שֶׁיָּבֹא
וּבִלְבַד שֶׁיָּבֹא:
חַג הַפֶּסַח הַיּוֹם וְלֶאֱמוּנָה אֵין חֵקֶר.

אַלְפֵי נְשִׁיקוֹת־עָבָר מְרִיעוֹת הַיּוֹם בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם,
הָעוֹלָם מִתְיַפֵּחַ בִּתְגוּבַת־אֵל נֶחֱנֶקֶת
וּמִקִּבְרוֹת אֲבוֹתַי בּוֹקֵעַ שִׁיר הַדָּם.
– יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, עִיר הַתְּפִלָּה וְהַצְּחִיחַ,
הֲתַצִּיעִי לִי הַיּוֹם מַצַּע־כְּלוּלוֹת חָם,
לִנְשִׁיקַת בַּעַל־נְעוּרַיִךְ, לַחֲתַן־הַדָּמִים,
לַאֲבֵל־הַדָּמִים.
לְהוֹלִיד מִתַּחַת לִבֵּךְ אֶת מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ?

Purity

The door does not turn; in my window, no face:
No woman comes to visit my place.

The books dream in peace, no knowledge, no action:
In my heart is no doubt, no sin, and no passion.

My hand's-breadth days the clock does not measure.
Around me is silence, serene aura, pure glimmer.

All-wondrous shadow, past and future too.
And I am no infidel, no saint, no Jew.

Purity, song's echo; flower, joy's sheen,
Astound, shower, sport, gleam.

In my heart's abyss, small children play
And I am pure as a babe of one day.

טָהֳרָה

הַדֶּלֶת לֹא תִסֹּב וְאֵין פָּנִים בְּחַלּוֹנִי;
וְאֵין נֶפֶשׁ אִשָּׁה מְבַקֶּרֶת אֶת מְלוֹנִי.

הַסְּפָרִים בַּחֲלוֹם־נַחַת, אֵין־דַּעַת, אֵין־מַעַשׂ;
וּבִלְבִּי אֵין סָפֵק, אֵין חֵטְא וְאֵין כַּעַס.

וּשְׁעוֹנִי לֹא יָמֹד אֶת יָמַי, יְמֵי־טְפָחוֹת,
וּסְבִיבִי: דּוּמִיָּה, הוֹד שַׁאֲנָן, צַחְצָחוֹת.

וְהַכֹּל – צֵל־פֶּלֶא, צֵל עָבָר וְעָתִיד;
וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יְהוּדִי, לֹא כּוֹפֵר, לֹא חָסִיד.

וּפִרְחֵי זִיו שָׂשׂוֹן וְטֹהַר הֵד שִׁירִים
מַפְלִיאִים, מַמְטִירִים, מִצְטַחֲקִים, מַזְהִירִים.

וִילָדִים מִשְׁתַּעַשְׁעִים בִּלְבָבִי, בִּתְהוֹמוֹ,
וְטָהוֹר אָנֹכִי כְּתִינוֹק בֶּן־יוֹמוֹ.

A Woman's Prayer

Guard me, oh God, from the cold winds that blow,
From the scorching wind's harm,
For the sake of the henhouse, the garden, and the cow
In the barn.

Because from an old father and mother,
Fragile from the womb, you have taken me
To bring forth bread from ascetic earth
And fruit from a fig tree.

And because in love and silence I accept
All good and evil due:
That the cow bellows, the grain is low,
And I am pregnant too.

תְּפִלַּת אִשָּׁה

שָׁמְרֵנִי, אֱלֹהִים, מֵרוּחַ קָרָה
וּמֵרוּחַ שׂוֹרֶפֶת
לְמַעַן שְׁלוֹם הַלּוּל וְהַגִּנָּה וְהַפָּרָה
שֶׁבָּרֶפֶת.

וְגַם בַּעֲבוּר שֶׁלְּקַחְתַּנִי, עֲנֻגָּה מֵרֶחֶם,
מֵאָב זָקֵן וּמֵאֵם זְקֵנָה
לְהוֹצִיא מִקַּרְקַע סְגוּפָה לֶחֶם
וְגַם תְּאֵנָה.

וּבַעֲבוּר שֶׁקִּבַּלְתִּי עָלַי בְּאַהֲבָה וּבִדְמָמָה
כָּל הַטּוֹב וְהָרָע;
אֲשֶׁר גּוֹעָה הַבְּהֵמָה וּנְמוּכָה הַקָּמָה
וַאֲנִי גַּם הָרָה.

Put Me into the Breach

Put me into the breach with every rolling stone,
With hammers fasten me in.
Perhaps I will placate my motherland and atone
The sin of the people who did not mend its ruins.

How good to know I am a stone like all the stones of Jerusalem:
With my bones bound up in the wall, happy am I.
Why should my body be less than my soul, in flood and flame
It accompanied this people in silence or keening cry?

Take me with the Jerusalem stone, place me in the walls,
Upon me daub cement,
And my pining bones will sing from the walls
Toward the Messiah's advent.*

שִׂימוּנִי בַּפִּרְצָה

עִם כָּל אֶבֶן מִתְגּוֹלֶלֶת שִׂימוּנִי בַּפִּרְצָה
וְחַזְּקוּנִי בַּמַּקָּבוֹת,
אוּלַי אֲכַפֵּר פְּנֵי מוֹלַדְתִּי, וְנִרְצָה
עֲוֹן הָעָם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא סָתַם הֶחֳרָבוֹת.

מַה טּוֹב וְיָדַעְתִּי, כִּי אֶבֶן אֲנִי כְּכָל אַבְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם,
וּמָה אָשַׁרְתִּי בְּהִתְקַשֵּׁר עַצְמוֹתַי עִם הַחוֹמָה,
לָמָּה יִדַּל גּוּפִי מִנַּפְשִׁי, אֲשֶׁר בְּאֵשׁ וּבְמַיִם
הָלְכָה עִם הָעָם בִּזְעָקָה אוֹ דְמוּמָה?

קָחוּנִי עִם הָאֶבֶן הַיְרוּשַׁלְמִית וְשִׂימוּנִי בַּכְּתָלִים
וְטוּחוּ עָלַי טִיחַ,
וּמֵחוֹמַת הַקִּיר יְרַנְּנוּ עַצְמוֹתַי הַכָּלִים
לִקְרַאת הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

Only of Myself I Knew How to Tell

Only of myself I knew how to tell,
My world like the ant's compressed.
Also my burdens I carried like her,
Too many, too heavy for my thin shoulder.

Also my path — like hers to the treetop —
Was a path of pain, a path of toil.
A giant hand, sure and malicious,
A teasing hand lay over all.

All my ways trembled and wept
At this giant hand, in constant fright.
Why did you call me, shores of wonder?
Why disappoint me, distant lights?

Here on Earth

Here on the earth — not in high clouds —
On this mother earth that is close:
To sorrow in her sadness, exult in her meager joy
That knows, so well, how to console.

רַק עַל עַצְמִי לְסַפֵּר יָדַעְתִּי

רַק עַל עַצְמִי לְסַפֵּר יָדַעְתִּי.
צַר עוֹלָמִי כְּעוֹלַם נְמָלָה,
גַּם מַשָּׂאַי עָמַסְתִּי כָּמוֹהָ
רַב וְכָבֵד מִכְּתֵפִי הַדַּלָּה.

גַּם אֶת דַּרְכִּי – כְּדַרְכָּהּ אֶל צַמֶּרֶת –
דֶּרֶךְ מַכְאוֹב וְדֶרֶךְ עָמָל,
יַד עֲנָקִים זֵידוֹנָה וּבוֹטַחַת,
יָד מִתְבַּדַּחַת שָׂמָה לְאַל.

כָּל אָרְחוֹתַי הֵלִיז וְהִדְמִיעַ
פַּחַד טָמִיר מִיַּד עֲנָקִים.
לָמָּה קְרָאתֶם לִי, חוֹפֵי הַפֶּלֶא?
לָמָּה כִּזַּבְתֶּם, אוֹרוֹת רְחוֹקִים?

כָּאן עַל פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה

כָּאן עַל פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה – לֹא בֶּעָבִים, מֵעַל –
עַל פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה הַקְּרוֹבָה, הָאֵם;
לְהֵעָצֵב בְּעָצְבָּהּ וְלָגִיל בְּגִילָהּ הַדַּל
הַיּוֹדֵעַ כָּל כָּךְ לְנַחֵם.

Not nebulous tomorrow but today: solid, warm, mighty,
Today materialized in the hand:
Of this single, short day to drink deep
Here in our own land.

Before night falls — come, oh come all!
A unified stubborn effort, awake
With a thousand arms. Is it impossible to roll
The stone from the mouth of the well?

Aftergrowth*

Yes, I did not plow, I did not sow,
I did not pray for the rain.
Suddenly, see now, my fields have sprouted,
In place of thorn, sun-blessed grain.

Is it the aftergrowth, provender of the old,
Grains of delight harvested long ago?
They have remembered me in days of calamity,
Burst forth the secret way in me to grow.

Burgeon, flourish, plains of wonder,
Burgeon, flourish, ripen in haste!
I remember the words of comfort:
Aftergrowth and aftergrowth, you shall eat.

לֹא עַרְפִלֵּי מָחָר – הַיּוֹם הַמּוּמָשׁ בַּיָּד,
הַיּוֹם הַמּוּצָק, הֶחָם, הָאֵיתָן;
לִרְווֹת אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, הַקָּצָר, הָאֶחָד,
עַל פְּנֵי אַדְמָתֵנוּ כָּאן.

בְּטֶרֶם אָתָא הַלֵּיל – בּוֹאוּ, בּוֹאוּ הַכֹּל!
מַאֲמָץ מְאֻחָד, עַקְשָׁנִי וָעֵר
שֶׁל אֶלֶף זְרוֹעוֹת. הַאֻמְנָם יִבָּצֵר לָגֹל
אֶת הָאֶבֶן מִפִּי הַבְּאֵר?

סָפִיחַ

הֵן לֹא חָרַשְׁתִּי, גַּם לֹא זָרַעְתִּי,
לֹא הִתְפַּלַּלְתִּי עַל הַמָּטָר.
וּפֶתַע, רְאֵה נָא! שְׂדוֹתַי הִצְמִיחוּ
דָּגָן בְּרוּךְ שֶׁמֶשׁ בִּמְקוֹם דַּרְדַּר.

הַאִם הוּא סְפִיחַ תְּנוּבוֹת מִקֶּדֶם,
חִטֵּי חֶדְוָה הֵם, קְצוּרִים מֵאָז?
אֲשֶׁר פְּקָדוּנִי בִּימֵי הָעֳנִי,
בָּקְעוּ עָלוּ בִּי בְּאֹרַח רָז.

שַׂגְשֵׂגְנָה, שְׂגֶינָה, שַׁדְמוֹת הַפֶּלֶא,
שַׂגְשֵׂגְנָה, שְׂגֶינָה וּגְמֹלְנָה חִישׁ!
אֲנִי זוֹכֶרֶת דִּבְרֵי הַנֹּחַם:
תֹּאכְלוּ סָפִיחַ וְאַף סָחִישׁ.

III

The Modernists

המודרניזם העברי

By the Waters of the Sava*

Brother soldiers — With them in battle I reached the waters of the Sava.
They fell, feet up in the barbed wire,
Prolonged only the thin wail, their life's essence expiring,
Then they died, very dark.
I stood alone, like the last human being fighting in the world,
And I saw my growing brothers with their feet up,
Until they came to their death kicking at the sky:
I saw the moon, as if alive, scratching its silver face
On the blunted hobnailed soles of overturned soldiers.
This terrible radiance on the nails of the dead who kick the sky
Electrified my life with deadly shining terror.
The Divine in the mystery of fear* I visioned and man's downfall, with eyes of flesh.
As the last one who weeps, there I wept mightily.
In my life, I shall never weep again as I wept by the waters of Sava.

A Penny for You*

A penny for you, philosophers of eternity —
Of the spirit's life after death —
A penny for you, for the wrinkles on the forehead.

עַד מֵימֵי הַסָּוָה

— — — אַחִים חַיָּלִים – אִתָּם הִגַּעְתִּי בַּקְּרָב עַד מֵימֵי הַסָּוָה,
וְהֵם נָפְלוּ בְּרַגְלֵיהֶם־לְמַעְלָה אֶל סְבָכוֹת הַבַּרְזֶל,
וַיֶּאֱרַךְ רַק דַּק יְלֵל תַּמְצִית חַיֵּיהֶם הַגּוֹוְעָה,
הֵם מֵתוּ אֲפֵלִים מְאֹד אָז.
אֶחָד עָמַדְתִּי, כְּאַחֲרוֹן לְגֶזַע הָאָדָם הַלּוֹחֵם בָּעוֹלָם,
וְרָאִיתִי אֶת אַחַי הַגְּדֵלִים בְּרַגְלַיִם לְמַעְלָה,
עַד אֲשֶׁר יַגִּיעוּ בְּמוֹתָם לִבְעוֹט בַּשָּׁמַיִם;
וְאֶת הַיָּרֵחַ רָאִיתִי מְחַכֵּךְ כַּחַי אֶת פָּנָיו הַכְּסוּפִים
בַּמַּסְמְרִים הַשְּׁחוּקִים עַל סוּלְיוֹת חַיָּלִים הֲפוּכִים.
וְהַזֹּהַר הַנּוֹרָא הַזֶּה עַל מַסְמְרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנַעֲלֵי מֵתִים הַבּוֹעֲטִים שְׁחָקִים,
חִשְׁמֵל אֶת חַיַּי בְּאֵימָה זוֹרַחַת עַד מָוֶת.
אֱלֹהוּת בְּסוֹד פַּחַד חָזִיתִי וּמַפַּל הָאָדָם, בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּשָׂר.
וְאָנֹכִי בָּכִיתִי אֲזַי שָׁם כְּאַחֲרוֹן הַבּוֹכִים
וְלֹא אֵבְךְּ עוֹד בְּחַיַּי כַּבְּכִיָּה הַהִיא שֶׁבָּכִיתִי עַל מֵימֵי הַסָּוָה.

אֲסִימוֹן לָכֶם

אֲסִימוֹן לָכֶם, פִּלּוֹסוֹפֵי הַנֶּצַח
לְחַיֵּי הָרוּחַ לְאַחַר הַמָּוֶת...
אֲסִימוֹן לָכֶם בְּעַד קִמְטֵי הַמֵּצַח.

An aching body I choose to be
For the sake of the nail on my pink finger
That is dear to me.

A simple white pleasure I choose,
To put a white coat on my flesh —
That was dipped in water and came out so fresh —
Than to be a cosmic fragment in the dust.

A penny for you, for all your lovely words!

And the whole secret of sorrow, I comprehend,
And the perversity in all our life's events —
Is in death's end.

In the Covenant's Radiance

In the covenant's radiance that moment had come:
The emperor was pressed by the golden crown
That pressed like a crag:
And the emperor is a body: melancholy, fatigued.
Barefoot on the ground of the olive-press he stood
And the kingdom rolled off his heart like a stone —

וּבוֹחֵר אֲנִי הֱיוֹת גְּוִיָּה כֹּאֶבֶת
לְשֵׁם הַצִּפֹּרֶן שֶׁל אֶצְבָּעִי הַוְּרֻדָּה
שֶׁהִיא לִי חֲמוּדָה.

וּבוֹחֵר אֲנִי עֹנֶג פָּשׁוּט וְלָבָן
בְּשִׂימַת כֻּתֹּנֶת לְבָנָה עַל בְּשָׂרִי,
שֶׁטָּבַל בַּמַּיִם וְיָצָא כֹּה טָרִי –
מֵאֲשֶׁר הֱיוֹת חֵלֶק קוֹסְמִי בֶּעָפָר...

אֲסִימוֹן לָכֶם בְּעַד כָּל אִמְרֵי שֶׁפֶר!

וְיוֹדֵעַ אֲנִי כִּי כָּל סוֹד הָעַצֶּבֶת
וְהָעִקֵּשׁ הַזֶּה בְּכָל קוֹרוֹת חַיֵּינוּ –
בְּתַכְלִית הַמָּוֶת.

וּבְנֹגַה הַבְּרִית

וּבְנֹגַה הַבְּרִית בָּא הָרֶגַע הַלָּז:
וּמֵעִיק לַקֵּיסָר גַּם נֵזֶר הַפָּז,
מֵעִיק כַּכֵּף.
וְהַקֵּיסָר הוּא גוּף: נוּגֶה דָם וְעָיֵף.
וְעַל קַרְקַע הַקֹּטֶב הוּא נִצָּב יָחֵף.
וְהַמַּלְכוּת נָגְלָה כְּאֶבֶן מִלֵּב – –

The people would not know, nor his army.
His captains would not know in the fleet at sea
That the emperor stepped down,
That the emperor was gone —

He had conquered, who begged at the doors,
His head without crown,
That which the king in the world could not win,
That which no king in the world would win.

At Your Feet, Jerusalem

Kings cast wreaths at your feet and fall upon their faces
  And they are then wonderful servants to you and your God.
Rome too sends its marble, crystal and gold
  To build within you a summit sanctuary for fame and glory.
And we, we your barefoot sons and daughters
  Who come to you beggared from the ends of the world,
We are, as we here are, children
  Of Sovereignty: of the cactus growing by itself, of the waves of the cliffs.
We who leave Jewish community
  In the world, put our coat of many colors, like a lizard, into the bag.
Father scolded, mother wept, and the white bed was orphaned.
To you we have brought blood and fingers, love and muscles: unburdened

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וְלֹא יָדַע צְבָאוֹ, לֹא יָדַע הָעָם,
לֹא יָדְעוּ קְבַרְנִיטָיו בַּצִּי שֶׁבַּיָּם:
כִּי הַקֵּיסָר יָרַד,
כִּי הַקֵּיסָר אָבַד – –

וְהַמְחַזֵּר עַל פְּתָחִים הוּא הַזֶּה שֶׁנִּצַּח
בְּלִי כֶתֶר עַל רֹאשׁ,
אֶת מַה שֶּׁהַמֶּלֶךְ בַּיְּקוּם לֹא כָבַשׁ
וּמַה שֶּׁכָּל מֶלֶךְ בַּיְּקוּם לֹא יִכְבֹּשׁ.

לְמַרְגְּלוֹתַיִךְ, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

מְלָכִים מַטִּילִים עֲטָרוֹת לְמַרְגְּלוֹתַיִךְ וְנוֹפְלִים עַל
  פְּנֵיהֶם וְהֵם אָז עֲבָדִים נִפְלָאִים לָךְ וְלֵאלֹהַיִךְ.
גַּם רוֹמָא שׁוֹלַחַת אֶת שֵׁשָׁהּ, בְּדֻלְחָהּ וּזְהָבָהּ
  לְהָקִים בָּךְ מִקְדָּשׁ עַל פִּסְגָּה לְשֵׁם וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת.
וְאָנוּ, וְאָנוּ בָּנַיִךְ וּבְנוֹתַיִךְ
  הַיְחֵפִים, שֶׁבָּאוּ אֵלַיִךְ מִקַּצְוֵי הָעוֹלָם מְרוּדִים,
אֲנַחְנוּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִנֵּנוּ פֹּה בָּנִים
  לְמַלְכוּת: לַצָּבָר הַגָּדֵל מֵאֵלָיו וּלְגַלֵּי הַכֵּפִים.
אֲנַחְנוּ הַיּוֹצְאִים מִכְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
  בָּעוֹלָם, נָתַנּוּ כְּתֹנֶת הַפַּסִּים כַּחֹמֶט בַּיַּלְקוּט.
אָב זָעַף, אֵם בָּכְתָה וּמִטָּה לְבָנָה נִתְיַתְּמָה.
הֲבֵאנוּ לָךְ דָּם וְאֶצְבָּעוֹת, אַהֲבָה וּשְׁרִירִים; כְּתֵפַיִם מֻפְקָרוֹת

Shoulders to carry the Hebrew globe with its open sores.
All our dreams and our ambitions we gave up
That we might be poor laborers in the wasteland.
Where in the world can you find its like? Ask, you who were burned by Titus!
Where do they love rusty sovereignty with eternal love?
Where is the wailing of jackals heard with great compassion?
Where do they fever in red song, where do they shrivel and grow silent,
And cool flaming foreheads and kiss the cliffs?
The heatwind here slowly burns away our dear youth
Whose dust is scattered daily over the crevices like gold
And we ask no compensation for our destruction.
And with our precious bodies we cover the swamps,
As our hands drive into them the eucalyptus trees.
We who provide a feast for the worms of Canaan,
We are prepared with faithful bodies, fevering
To be the warm bridge for the sovereignty that comes
Over the abyss of blood.
Should a sword be sharpened in Canaan against you —
We would make for you a witness-pile of bodies like an outer wall.
And someone who denies the glory in pain and in your disaster
Struggles from cliff to cliff here, cursing and reviling —
Yes, you will forgive him, and allow him to abuse:
To pass from cliff to cliff because his spleen has risen up.
It is impossible to snap the head off the body with one's hands
And throw it like a pot on one of the angry rocks.

לִנְשׂוֹא אֶת הַגְּלוֹבּוּס הָעִבְרִי בִּנְגָעָיו הַקָּשִׁים,
וְכָל הַחֲלוֹמוֹת וְכָל הַמַּאֲוַיִּים נָתַנּוּ
בְּעַד הֱיוֹתֵנוּ פּוֹעֲלִים עֲנִיִּים בִּישִׁימוֹן.
אֵי מָשָׁל בָּעוֹלָם לָךְ? שַׁאֲלִי, שְׂרוּפָה מִטִּיטוּס!
אֵי אוֹהֲבִים מַלְכוּת חֲלוּדָה בְּאַהֲבַת עוֹלָם?
אֵי שׁוֹמְעִים לְיִלְלַת תַּנִּים בְּרַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים?
אֵי קוֹדְחִים בְּרִנָּה אֲדֻמָּה, אֵי צוֹמְקִים וְשׁוֹתְקִים
וּמְצַנְּנִים מְצָחִים לוֹהֲטִים – וְנוֹשְׁקִים – בַּכֵּפִים?
הַשָּׁרָב פֹּה שׂוֹרֵף לְאַט עֲלוּמֵינוּ
הַחֲמוּדִים וְאֶפְרָם יְפֻזַּר יוֹם יוֹם עַל נְקִיקִים כַּזָּהָב
וְאֵין אָנוּ דוֹרְשִׁים שִׁלּוּמִים בְּעַד חָרְבָּנֵנוּ.
וְאָנוּ הַמְכַסִּים הַבִּצּוֹת בְּגוּפִים
יְקָרִים, בִּתְקוֹעַ בָּהֶן הַיָּדַיִם עֲצֵי־אֶקָלִפְּטוּס,
אָנוּ הַנּוֹתְנִים אֲרִיסְטוֹן לְתוֹלְעֵי כְּנַעַן,
אָנוּ נְכוֹנִים בְּגוּפִים נֶאֱמָנִים
בְּקָדְחָם לִהְיוֹת הַגֶּשֶׁר הַחַם לְמַלְכוּתֵךְ הַבָּאָה
מֵעַל לִתְהוֹם דָּמִים.
לוּ חֶרֶב הוּחַדָּה בִּכְנַעַן וּבָאָה עָדַיִךְ –
וְעָשִׂינוּ לָךְ גַּלְעֵד מִגּוּפִים כְּחוֹמָה לַחוֹמָה!
וְאֶחָד הַכּוֹפֵר בַּהוֹד שֶׁבִּכְאֵב וַאֲסוֹנֵךְ,
מִתְלַבֵּט מִכֵּף אֱלֵי כֵף פֹּה וּמְחָרֵף – וּמְגַדֵּף –
הֵן תִּסְלְחִי, תִּסְלְחִי לוֹ וְתִתְּנִיהוּ לְחָרֵף,
לָלֶכֶת מִכֵּף אֱלֵי כֵף פֹּה כִּי עָלְתָה מָרָתוֹ:
אִי־אֶפְשָׁר לְהַתִּיק הָרֹאשׁ מִן הַגּוּף בְּיָדַיִם
וּלְהַשְׁלִיכוֹ כִּקְדֵרָה אֶל אַחַד הַסְּלָעִים הַזּוֹעֲמִים.

But the hiss of this serpent is also the shadow of a melody!
And the soles of his feet danced a Hora* here,
    Crying, "God will build the desolation,"* in the light of the stars.
And until he goes to Jaffa, to the office of the émigrés,
    And puts his muddy coat, like a lizard, into the bag —
Yet many days
    Will he stand and quarry your rocks — at your feet —
And he will eat his bread in a sweat — the shew bread —
    Bitterly will he smoke a cigarette with his blood in his eyes.
Perhaps he will also dance another Hora
    With his dragging feet — one last time —
And shout "God will build" in the light of the great stars!

* * *

We Were Not Likened to Dogs among the Gentiles

We were not likened to dogs among the Gentiles — They pity a dog,
Caress, even kiss him with the Gentile mouth. For like a puppy
Fondled at home, they pamper it, delight in it always:
And when this dog dies — how very much the Gentiles mourn him!

We were not led like sheep to the slaughter in the boxcars
For like leprous sheep they led us to extinction
Over all the beautiful landscapes of Europe...
The Gentiles did not handle their sheep as they handled our bodies:

וְלַחַשׁ הַנָּחָשׁ הַזֶּה הוּא גַּם צֵל שֶׁל נְגִינָה!
וְכַפּוֹת רַגְלַיִם הַלָּלוּ הֵן רָקְדוּ פֹּה הוֹרָה
    בִּזְעָקָה „אֵל יִבְנֶה הַשַּׁמָּה", לְאוֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים!
וְעַד אֲשֶׁר יֵלֵךְ לְיָפוֹ אֶל לִשְׁכַּת הַיּוֹרְדִים
    וְנָתַן כֻּתָּנְתּוֹ הַדְּלוּחָה, כַּחוֹמֶט בַּיַּלְקוּט –
עוֹד יָמִים עַל
    יָמִים כֹּה יַעֲמוֹד וְיַחֲצוֹב בַּסְּלָעִים – לְמַרְגְּלוֹתַיִךְ.
וְיֹאכַל אֶת לַחְמוֹ בְּזֵעָה – אֶת לֶחֶם
    הַפָּנִים; וִיעַשֵּׁן בִּמְרִירוּת סִיגָרָה וְדָמוֹ בְּעֵינָיו,
וְאוּלַי גַּם יִרְקוֹד עוֹד הוֹרָה
    בְּרַגְלָיו הַכְּבֵדוֹת – רַק פַּעַם עוֹד אַחַד –
וְזָעַק „אֵל יִבְנֶה" לְאוֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים הַגְּדוֹלִים!

לֹא נִדְמֵינוּ לִכְלָבִים

לֹא נִדְמֵינוּ לִכְלָבִים בַּגּוֹיִם... כִּי הֵן כֶּלֶב אֶצְלָם יְרַחַם
יְלַטֵּף וְיֵשׁ גַּם שֶׁיְּנַשֵּׁק מִפִּי גוֹי, כִּי כַּוָּלָד
חָמוּד בְּבֵיתוֹ יְפַנְּקֵהוּ וְשָׂשׂ בּוֹ תָּמִיד;
וּבְמוֹת כֶּלֶב זֶה, מַה מְּאֹד יֶאֱבַל עָלָיו גּוֹי!

לֹא הוּבַלְנוּ כַּצֹּאן לְטִבְחָה בִּקְרוֹנוֹת רַכָּבוֹת
כִּי כְּצֹאן מְצֹרָע הוֹבִילוּנוּ לְמוֹ כְּלָיָה
דֶּרֶךְ כָּל הַנּוֹפִים הַיָּפִים בְּאֵירוֹפָּה...
לֹא כִלְצֹאנָם עָשׂוּ הַגּוֹיִם בְּגוּפֵנוּ:

Before slaughter they did not pull out the teeth of their sheep:
They did not strip the wool from their bodies as they did to us:
They did not push the sheep into the fire to make ash of the living
And to scatter the ashes over streams and sewers.

Are there other analogies to this, our disaster that came to us at their hands?
There are no other analogies (all words are shades of shadow) —
Therein lies the horrifying phrase: No other analogies!
For every cruel torture that man may yet do to man in a Gentile country —
He who comes to compare will state: He was tortured like a Jew.
Every fright, every terror, every loneliness, every chagrin,
Every murmuring, weeping in the world
He who compares will say: This analogy is of the Jewish kind.

There is no recompense for our disaster, for its circumference is the world:
The whole culture of the Gentile Kingdoms to its peak — through our blood;
And all its conscience — through our weeping.

Lord! You Saved Me from Ur-Germany as I Fled

Lord! You saved me from Ur-Germany* as I fled
Mother's and father's threshold and I arrived whole
In body but with my soul torn, within it the lake-of-weeping…*
Now I live on my mourning. On me lies the agony of my word

בְּטֶרֶם שְׁחִיטָה לֹא עָקְרוּ אֶת שִׁנֵּי הַצֹּאן:
לֹא פָּשְׁטוּ מִגּוּפָם אֶת צַמְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר לָנוּ עָשׂוּ:
לֹא דָחֲפוּ אֶת הַצֹּאן אֶל הָאֵשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵפֶר מִן חַי
וְלִזְרוֹת אֶת הָאֵפֶר אֶל פְּנֵי נְחָלִים וּבִיבִים...

הֲיֵשׁ מְשָׁלִים עוֹד לְזֶה אֲסוֹנֵנוּ שֶׁבָּא לָן מִיָּדָם?
אֵין עוֹד מְשָׁלִים (כָּל הַמִּלִּים צֶאֱלֵי צְלָלִים) –
וּבָזֶה הַבִּטּוּי הַמַּחֲרִיד: אֵין עוֹד מְשָׁלִים!
כָּל עִנּוּי אַכְזָר שֶׁיֵּעָשֶׂה בֶּן אָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ גּוֹיִית לְאָדָם,
יְדַמֵּהוּ הַבָּא־לְהַמְשִׁיל: הוּא עֻנָּה כִיהוּדִי
כָּל מָגוֹר כָּל זְוָעָה כָּל בְּדִידוּת כָּל עָגְמָה
כָּל בְּכִיָּה הוֹמִיָּה בָעוֹלָם
יֹאמַר הַמַּמְשִׁיל: זֶה מָשָׁל מִן הַמִּין הַיְּהוּדִי.

אֵין שִׁלֵּם לַאֲסוֹנֵנוּ כִּי מִדַּת הֶקֵּפוֹ הוּא עוֹלָם:
כָּל תַּרְבּוּת מַלְכֻיּוֹת הַגּוֹיִם עַד שִׂיאָהּ – בְּדָמֵנוּ
וְכָל מַצְפּוּנָהּ – בְּבִכְיֵנוּ.

אֱלוֹהִים! הִצַּלְתַּנִי מֵאוּר אַשְׁכְּנַז

אֱלֹהִים! הִצַּלְתַּנִי מֵאוּר אַשְׁכְּנַז בְּבָרְחִי
מִסַּף בֵּית אָבִי וְאִמִּי וְהִגַּעְתִּי שָׁלֵם
בְּגוּפִי אַף עִם נֶפֶשׁ קְרוּעָה בוֹ בְּכִנֶּרֶת־הַבֶּכִי...
כָּעֵת חַי עַל אֶבְלִי, עָלַי עָקַת דְּבָרִי הוּא

Knowing it is the order: To live: To carry that heritage
Dropped from my martyrs' shoulders and to deed the future
My beautiful-portion-in-the-heritage-of-Israel for generations,
Till it is brought to the mountain of yearning
And unloaded from my shoulders: like the fine marble blocks,
Like gold, silver and bronze bars, like precious stones:
For the building and the completion of the Sanctuary-of-Wondrous-Yearning
Where all yearning ceases to pain:
The heart delivers to the harp its beat and longing for the Omnipresent,
And the harp plays this heart —

Lord! I live, from your hand have I strength to live
On my mourning without its forcing me to perish…
On the dusts of my people this one time, I beg,
Endow me with the strength of speech,
With the secret strength of the Commandments at Sinai…
I will bring them to the ears of my multitude as I come to teach them:
Here you are the heirs, filling the place of martyrs,
Whose mouths are crushed in the dust of exile, in a sea of blood —
For their sake the miracle happened to you, the enemy did not pass through
your land.
Each of their burdens slipping as they fell, their blood spilling,
Pray let us carry on our shoulders with love! With their world's song.

בִּידִיעָה כִּי הַצַּו הוּא: לִחְיוֹת: כְּדֵי שְׂאֵת בַּיְרֻשָּׁה הַהִיא
שֶׁשָּׁמְטָה מִכִּתְפֵי קְדוֹשַׁי וּלְהוֹרִישׁ אֶל הַבָּא
אֶת חֶלְקִי־הַיָּפֶה־בִּירֻשַּׁת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדוֹרוֹת,
עֲדֵי תוּבָא אֶל הָהָר הַנִּכְסָף
וּתְפֹרַק מִכְּתֵפַיִם: כְּגוּשֵׁי הַשַּׁיִשׁ הַטּוֹב,
כִּמְטִילֵי זָהָב כֶּסֶף וּנְחֹשֶׁת וְכַאֲבָנִים יְקָרוֹת:
בִּשְׁבִיל בִּנְיָן וְשִׁכְלוּל בֵּית־מִקְדַּשׁ־הַכִּסּוּף־הַנֶּאְדָּר
שֶׁבּוֹ כָּל הַכֹּסֶף חָדֵל מִלִּכְאֹב:
הַלֵּב מוֹסֵר לָעֻגָב אֶת דָּפְקוֹ וְחִשְׁקוֹ בַּמָּקוֹם
וְהָעֻגָב מְנַגֵּן לֵבָב זֶה – –

אֱלֹהִים! אֲנִי חַי, מִיָּדְךָ לִי הַכֹּחַ לִחְיוֹת
עַל אֶבְלִי, לְבַל זֶה יַכְרִיעֵנִי עַד כְּלוֹת...
עַל עַפְרוֹת עַמִּי הַפַּעַם אַחַת אֲבַקֵּשׁ
הַעֲנִיקֵנִי מִכֹּחַ נִיבִים,
מִסּוֹד כֹּחַ דִּבְּרוֹת מִסִּינַי,
אֲבִיאֵם בְּאָזְנֵי הֲמוֹנַי, בְּבוֹאִי לְלַמְּדָם:
הִנְּכֶם פֹּה יוֹרְשִׁים, מְמַלְאֵי מְקוֹמָם שֶׁל קְדוֹשִׁים,
שֶׁפִּיהֶם־הַמָּחוּץ בַּעֲפַר גָּלֻיּוֹת וְיָם דָּם –
בַּעֲבוּרָם קָרָכֶם נֵס וְלֹא עָבַר הָאוֹיֵב אַרְצְכֶם.
כָּל מַשָּׂאָם שֶׁשָּׁמַט בְּנָפְלָם, בְּהִגָּר שָׁם דָּמָם,
נָא נִשָּׂא עַל כְּתֵפַיִם בְּאַהַב! בְּנִגּוּן עוֹלָמָם.

In the Khamsin

(excerpts from *Massadah*)

On roads beyond the camp the Khamsin* struck me.
From the flaming easterly wind to the shade of a bush I came,
But there was no shelter in the shade.
Without any hope I threw back a weary head
And I knew:
Here even shade melts in the Khamsin,
Here even God forgot to camp...
Orphaned of grace, like myself, over my head the bush bent
And I heard its plaint:
"How great is my insult, oh God, how great my pain
For shade you have given me
But in it, no shelter for the weary..."

*

The distant soughing of pine forests caresses my ear.
The basket of childhood* swam on Ikvah's* cold waters
In shady reeds —
Leave me visions of yesterday! Why have you beset me?

בַּחַמְסִין

(מתוך הפואימה „מסדה״)

עַל דְּרָכִים אֲשֶׁר מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה הִכַּנִי הַשָּׁרָב,
מִלַּהַט רוּחַ הַקָּדִים בְּצֵל שִׂיחַ־דֶּרֶךְ בָּאתִי,
וְאֵין מַחֲסֶה בַּצֵּל.
הִפְשַׁלְתִּי רֹאשׁ עָיֵף בְּאֶפֶס תִּקְוָה
וָאֵדַע:
פֹּה גַּם צֵל יִמֹּג בַּשָּׁרָב,
פֹּה חֲנוֹת שָׁכַח גַּם אֵל...
יְתוֹם־חֶסֶד כָּמוֹנִי עַל רֹאשִׁי שַׁח הַשִּׂיחַ
וָאֶשְׁמַע תְּלוּנָתוֹ:
„מָה רַב עֶלְבּוֹנִי, אֱלֹהִים, וּמַה גָּדוֹל הַכְּאֵב
כִּי צֵל נָתַתָּ לִי
וְאֵין מַחֲסֶה בּוֹ לֶעָיֵף...״

*

...רַעַשׁ יַעֲרוֹת־אֳרָנִים רָחוֹק יְלַטֵּף אָזְנִי.
...תֵּבַת־יַלְדוּת שָׁטָה עַל מֵי „אִיקְבָה״* קְרִירִים
בֵּין סוּף מֵצֵל — — —
עִזְבוּנִי, מַרְאוֹת־תְּמוֹל! מַה שַּׁתֶּם עָלָי?

From your rich earth I have plucked up all my roots,
And if Khamsin wither them here —
Let them wither!
To you when I anguish, I will not call again,
I will not plant them in your earth again.
Upon my back your sun was like a yellow badge* of shame.
Here have I come to shoulder burden of another sun,
And if it has become for me a curse —
Carry it, carry it too, my aching back!
I am a Jew still too proud
To go on begging
For another shelter and deliverance.

*

How little of God's grace caresses you, Massadah,
You lonely rejected one between wilderness and sea,
What will you do, poor mother, for your thirsty defenders,
As they nestle their heads into your lap
And it is their last refuge? —
In thirsty muteness I hang upon your throat
And I will not press you for I know your grief…
I know all — and why do you still offer me your breast…
When it is parched?

מֵאַדְמַתְכֶם דְּשֵׁנָה כָּל שָׁרָשַׁי עָקַרְתִּי,
וְאִם שָׁרָב פֹּה יְיַבְּשֵׁם –
יִיבָשׁוּ!
אֲלֵיכֶם, בַּצַּר לִי, שׁוּב לֹא אֶקְרָא,
בְּאַדְמַתְכֶם שֵׁנִית לֹא אֶטָּעֵם!
כְּטְלַאי־קָלוֹן צָהֹב הָיְתָה לִי שִׁמְשְׁכֶם עַל גַּבִּי
וָאָבֹא הֲלֹם לְכַתֵּף מַשָּׂא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ הָאַחֶרֶת,
וְאִם הָיְתָה לִי לִקְלָלָה –
שָׂא גַּם אוֹתָהּ, שָׂאֶהָ, גַּבִּי כּוֹאֵב!
אָדָם־מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל גֵּא מִדַּי אֲנִי,
כִּי אֵלֵךְ עוֹד לְבַקֵּשׁ
מִקְלָט אַחֵר לִי וְהַצָּלָה!

*

מַה מְּעַט חֶסֶד־אֵל יְלַטְּפֵךְ, מַסָּדָה,
אַתְּ הַנִּדָּחָה בֵּין יָם וִישִׁימוֹן,
וּמַה לְּלוֹחֲמַיִךְ הַצְּמֵאִים, אֵם דַּלָּה, תַּעֲשִׂי,
בְּכָבְשָׁם רֹאשׁ בְּחֵיקֵךְ
וְהוּא לָהֶם אַחֲרוֹן?..
אֲנִי בְּאֵלֶם־צָמָא נִתְלֵיתִי עַל צַוָּארֵךְ
וְלֹא אָצִיקָה לָּךְ, כִּי אֵדַע עָנְיֵךְ...
יָדַעְתִּי כֹּל... וּמָה עוֹד תְּחַלְּצִי לִי שַׁד –
וְהוּא צָחִיחַ?..

*

Why did Hagar weep over Ishmael* when he thirsted
And the water in the skin dwindled?
She had no need to weep —
Ishmael grew up and he became savage desert-taught,
Great distances his bow now threatens.
Heavy with schemes, on the humps of his camel he sways and sings —
Where is Sarah here to weep over her son Isaac?
Whose every hope has been cast here
To the terror of the wasteland?
Reveal yourself, oh reveal yourself, Angel of God.
Show the well, reveal the shade
To those fleeing from stepmothers' wrath
Whom in their shelter
Heat welcomed
Thirst smote.
Reveal yourself! There is no mother left to raise her voice and weep
And call to you!
Beneath the orphaned bush in desert refuge
Not the son of the Egyptian woman has been thrown away —
Here in thirst is Isaac swooning,
Abraham and Sarah's seed.

---

*

וְלָמָּה בָּכְתָה הָגָר עַל יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי צָמֵא
וַיִּכְלוּ מֵחֵמֶת מַיִם?
לֹא לָהּ הָיָה לִבְכּוֹת –
גָּדַל יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְהוּא פֶּרֶא לְמוּד־מִדְבָּר,
עַל מֶרְחַקִּים רַבִּים עַתָּה קַשְׁתּוֹ תְּאַיֵּם
וּכְבַד־מְזִמּוֹת עַל דַּבְּשׁוֹת גְּמַלָּיו יִתְנוֹעַע וְיָרֹן –
אֵי שָׂרָה כִּי תֵּבְךְּ לִבְנָהּ יִצְחָק
אֲשֶׁר כָּל יְהָבוֹ הָשְׁלַךְ פֹּה
עַל מוֹרָאוֹ שֶׁל הַיְשִׁימוֹן?
הִגָּלֵה, הָהּ, הִגָּלֵה, מַלְאַךְ אֱלֹהִים,
הַרְאֵה הַבְּאֵר, גַּלֵּה הַצֵּל
לִפְלִיטֵי זַעַם־חוֹרְגוֹת
אֲשֶׁר בְּמִקְלָטָם
קִדְּמָם שָׁרָב
וְצָמָא הִכָּם!
הִגָּלֵה! אֵין אֵם עוֹד אֲשֶׁר תִּשָּׂא קוֹלָהּ וְתֵבְךְּ
וּלְךָ תִּקְרָא!
וְתַחַת שִׂיחַ־יָתוֹם בְּמִדְבַּר־מִקְלָט
לֹא בֶּן־הַמִּצְרִית הָשְׁלַךְ –
פֹּה בַּצָּמָא יִתְעַלֵּף יִצְחָק,
זֶרַע אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה!

Israel

> And he said: No longer Jacob shall your name be called
> but Israel for you have contended with Gods
> and men and you have prevailed.
> *(Genesis 32:28–29)*

And so night after night, God, you come to me,
Not to favor me do you come, but my strength to try,
And as I prevail against you until morning — again I am alone,
A poor strange wayfarer, limping upon my thigh.*

"You have contended with Gods and with men and you have prevailed" —
Is this all the blessing you apportioned me, mysterious one?
Woe is me, I know, against all of you I have prevailed, over everything,
But over one I could not, over myself alone —

Your blessings weigh heavily upon me, I cannot carry them,
Limping and alone over all the highways I go,
Vanquish me once, oh You, and let me rest at morn
The rest that all the vanquished know!

Again it is night. I am alone. Again God descends.
"Israel!" — Here I am, God, here I am!
Oh, why do you come down each night to wrestle with me,
And as dawn rises you forsake me limping again? —

יִשְׂרָאֵל

> וַיֹּאמֶר: לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ
> כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים
> וְעִם אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל — —
> (בראשית לב, כח—כט)

וְכָכָה לַיְלָה לַיְלָה, אֱלֹהִים, אֵלַי תָּבוֹא,
לֹא לְחוֹנֵן תָּבֹאָה כִּי אִם נַסּוֹת כֹּחִי,
וּבְיָכְלִי לְךָ עַד בֹּקֶר – שׁוּב אֲנִי לְבַד,
הֵלֶךְ דַּל וָגֵר, צוֹלֵעַ עַל יְרֵכִי.

„שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעִם אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל" –
וְזֹאת כָּל הַבְּרָכָה אָצַלְתָּ לִי, פִּלְאִי?
אַלְלַי, יָדַעְתִּי, לְכֻלְּכֶם, לַכֹּל יָכֹלְתִּי,
וְלָאֶחָד לֹא אוּכָלָה, לֹא אוּכַל רַק לִי – –

כָּבְדָה בִּרְכָתְךָ עָלַי, לֹא אוּכַל שְׂאֵתָהּ,
צוֹלֵעַ וּבוֹדֵד עַל פְּנֵי כָּל הַדְּרָכִים,
נַצְּחֵנִי פַּעַם אַתָּה וּתְנֵנִי שְׁקֹט עִם בֹּקֶר
כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁקְטוּ כָּל הַמְנֻצָּחִים!

שׁוּב לַיְלָה. אֲנִי לְבַד. וְשׁוּב אֱלֹהִים יוֹרֵד.
„יִשְׂרָאֵל"! – הִנְנִי, אֱלֹהִים, הִנְנִי!
הָהּ, לָמָּה לַיְלָה־לַיְלָה לְהֵאָבֵק עִמִּי תָבוֹא
וְעִם עֲלוֹת הַשַּׁחַר צוֹלֵעַ תַּעַזְבֵנִי? – – –

Before Your Wonders I Stand, My World

Before your wonders I stand, my world,
And know not yet to whom my blood sings:
Each day miracle blooms, sunrose anew,
Evening glides soft and deepens evening blue.

Before your wonders I stand, my world.
Who are you? My blood convulses as I envision you.
Somnambulist night is my life; alone, tremulous I wander.
Still earth starts my sap and sky grows fair.

Before your wonders I stand, my world.
Pray — reveal yourself, oh you, to whom my blood cries out!
Like a star from the mountain, deliverance looks to me:
Pray — reveal yourself, my bereaved soul is weary.

Reward

I know the reward of the secret tear as it humbly falls,
Sensing refuge in the trembling eyelid even from merciful gaze:
Night dew's blessing on the cold silent grass stalk's head,
That the frost of the stalk, nestling in night's lap, moistens with its goodness —
The tear's blessing to the soul that trembles lonely in the cold

לִפְנֵי פְּלָאֶיךָ אֶעֱמוֹד, עוֹלָמִי...

לִפְנֵי פְּלָאֶיךָ אֶעֱמֹד, עוֹלָמִי,
וְלֹא אֵדַע, מִי הוּא זֶה אֲשֶׁר לוֹ יָרֹן דָּמִי:
יוֹם־יוֹם נֵס חָדָשׁ יִפְרַח שׁוֹשַׁן־שֶׁמֶשׁ
וְעֶרֶב יִגְלֹשׁ שֶׁקֶט וְעָמְקָה תְּכֵלֶת־אֶמֶשׁ.

לִפְנֵי פְּלָאֶיךָ אֶעֱמֹד, עוֹלָמִי:
מִי אַתָּה הוּא, אֲדַמְּךָ וְהִתְפַּלֵּץ דָּמִי?
לֵיל־סַהֲרוּרֵי חַיַּי: רוֹהֶה אֶתַע לְבַדִּי
וְיֵיף רָקִיעַ עוֹד וְאֶרֶץ תַּשְׁק לְשַׁדִּי.

לִפְנֵי פְּלָאֶיךָ אֶעֱמֹד, עוֹלָמִי.
הִגָּלֵה־נָא, אֲשֶׁר לְךָ יְשַׁוַּע דָּמִי!
כַּכּוֹכָב מִן הָהָר צוֹפִיָּה לִי גְּאֻלָּה;
הִגָּלֵה־נָא, כִּי עָיְפָה נַפְשִׁי הַשַּׁכּוּלָה.

שָׂכָר

יָדַעְתִּי שְׂכָרָהּ שֶׁל דִּמְעָה חֲרִישִׁית, כִּי תַּצְנִיעַ לָרֶדֶת,
חָשָׁה לָהּ מִפְלָט בְּעַפְעַף הַמְרַתֵּת מִמַּבָּט גַּם חַנּוּן:
בְּרָכָה שֶׁבְּטַל־לַיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעוֹל הַצּוֹנֵן, הַחֲשַׁאי,
שֶׁקִּפָּאוֹן הַגִּבְעוֹל, הַגְּלֻפָּה בְּחֵיק לַיְלָה, מַטְפִּיחַ טוּבוֹ —
בִּרְכַּת הַדִּמְעָה לַנְּשָׁמָה, הָרוֹעֶדֶת בָּדָד בַּקָּרָה

Returning to take shelter in her hiding place, that pure sanctuary,
Where God's modest candle burns, illumines it and does not extinguish.
I know there is reward for whispers of each heart longing in darkness,
For the tremor of each soul that pines away in unheard prayer.
Silent the subdued prayer pours and grows pregnant, embroiders for itself
Tapestries of mercy angels, on its ladder they climb heavenward
And fly with Throne of Glory* filling their hands with white flame.
On prayer's ladder* they return their modest mother to the soul
Strewing in it sparks of holy flame, making luminous incurable orphancy.
Mute is man in his own orphancy, lonely he remains in his orphancy.
The eye's gaze never tells its depth, nor sound suggests its weight.
Fortunate is he who knows, envisions this truth from the prison of his aching flesh,
Neither tries to flee his prisoned muteness, nor pines when he fails.
And if he guesses who his torment is, only kisses the torment and forgets it
As the light young snow kisses the bird's back and melts,
So, mute necessity, as before, the secret, humble tear alone saves.
You too make peace, my being, with necessity make peace.
Alone among lonely brothers I too shall mark my orphan path,
And pity them, all the mute, although my pity they do not know.
They will not know that, like them, I am mercy burdened too, also I.
Alone, never proud, I heed the murmur of their silence — my own.
The secret tear, both mine and theirs, the modest prayer I gulp,
And pain and muteness in me shall sprout purity, this is the lot of man.

וְשָׁבָה לִמְצוֹא חָסוּת־מָה בְּחֶבְיוֹנָהּ, בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ הַטָּהוֹר,
שֶׁנֵּר אֵל צָנוּעַ יִדְלַק בָּהּ גַּלְמוּד, יְאִירָהּ וְלֹא יִכְבֶּה.
יָדַעְתִּי: שָׂכָר יֵשׁ לְלַחַשׁ כָּל לֵב מִתְגַּעְגֵּעַ בָּאֹפֶל
וּלְרֶטֶט כָּל נֶפֶשׁ יוֹצֵאת וְכָלָה בִּתְפִלָּה לֹא־נִשְׁמַעַת.
דּוֹמָם תִּגַּר הַתְּפִלָּה הַכְּבוּשָׁה וְהָרְתָה וְרָקְמָה לָהּ
רִקְמַת מַלְאֲכֵי־רַחֲמִים, הָעוֹלִים בְּסֻלָּמָהּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה
וְטָסִים עִם כִּסֵּא־הַכָּבוֹד וּמְמַלְּאִים חָפְנֵיהֶם לִבְנַת אֵשׁ.
בְּסֻלַּם הַתְּפִלָּה, הוֹרָתָם הַבּוֹשָׁה, אֶל הַנֶּפֶשׁ יָשׁוּבוּ
וְרִשְׁפֵּי אֵשׁ־הַקֹּדֶשׁ, יִזְרוּ בָּהּ, יַגִּיהוּ יָתוֹם אֵין־מַרְפֵּא־לוֹ.
אֵלֶם הָאָדָם בִּיתוּמוֹ וּבוֹדֵד יִשָּׁאֵר בִּיתוּמוֹ:
לֹא יַגִּיד מַבַּט־עַיִן עָמְקוֹ וְהֶגֶה כָּבְדּוֹ לֹא יִרְמֹז.
וְאַשְׁרֵי אִישׁ יוֹדֵעַ, חוֹזֶה זֹאת מִכֶּלֶא בְּשָׂרוֹ הַנִּכְאָב
וְגִיחַ מִכֶּלֶא אִלְּמוֹ לֹא יָנֻס, וְלֹא יִדְוֶה כִּי נִכְשָׁל.
לוּא יֵשׁ וְנִחֵשׁ מִי מַדְוֵהוּ – וְנָשַׁק לַמַּדְוֶה וּשְׁכֵחוֹ,
כַּשֶּׁלֶג הַקַּל, הַצָּעִיר, הַנּוֹשֵׁק גֵּו־צִפּוֹר וְנָמַס,
וְכֹרַח הָאֵלֶם כְּקֶדֶם דִּמְעָה מַצְנִיעָה אַךְ תִּדְלֵהוּ.
הַשְׁלִימִי גַּם אַתְּ, הֲוָיָתִי, עִם הַכֹּרַח הַשְׁלִימִי:
בּוֹדֵד בֵּין אַחִים בּוֹדְדִים שְׁבִיל שְׁתוּקַי אֶתְוֶה גַּם אָנֹכִי.
רַחֵם אֲרַחֵם אֶת כֻּלָּם, הָאִלְּמִים, וְלֹא יֵדְעוּ רַחֲמַי
וְלֹא יֵדְעוּ כִּי טָעוּן רַחֲמִים גַּם אֲנִי כְּמוֹהֶם, גַּם אָנֹכִי.
בָּדָד וְלֹא־גֵאֶה אַאֲזִין לְהֶמְיַת דִּמְמָתָם־דִּמְמָתִי;
דִּמְעַת־סֵתֶר, שֶׁלִּי כְּשֶׁלָּהֶם, וּתְפִלָּה מְבֻיָּשָׁה אֲעַלֵּעַ
וְצַעַר וָאֵלֶם יָנִיבוּ בִּי טֹהַר, זֶה חֵלֶק אָדָם.

Here Is Much Burning Anger

Here is much burning anger, mighty hate,
    The prickly thorns spread like cactuses!
God, my God! Where is a man of vision, of indignation great,
    In whom, though one alone, wrath converges,

Bursts forth like fire, in an expanse of prairie,
    That hands have set against
Flashing conflagration, till it holds no strength or terror,
    And quench the rebel treason and intrigue with flame?

Where is the man of vision? Camel-like with covered eyes
    Men circle as if grinding bread:
Yet no kernel crumb between the millstones lies.
    With strong shoulder bent, circling in place, men tread.

This lying pride, this toiling without wheat;
    No man says to his friend: Be strong, Peace!
Though the heat of one day strikes their wounded feet
    And one frost, on a night without dream.

Only his bloody wound he shows repeatedly,
    My blood is redder, you who pass, look here!
And round about the people in a panic flee
    Too terrified to ask: Where is my people's comforter?

פֹּה רַב חֲרִי־הָאַף...

פֹּה רַב חֲרִי־הָאַף, רַבָּה הַמַּשְׂטֵמָה,
    פָּשׂוּ הָעֳקָצִים כְּבִמְשׂוּכַת־צַבָּר.
אֵלִי, אֵלִי! אֵי אִישׁ־חָזוֹן גְּדָל־הַחֵמָה,
    בּוֹ, כְּאֶחָד רַק הוּא, הַזַּעַם יִצְטַבָּר,

וְיִתְפָּרֵץ כָּאֵשׁ בְּמֶרְחֲבֵי־שְׂדֵמָה,
    יָדַיִם עֲרָכוּהָ לְמַעַן בּוֹא מִנֶּגֶד
לְתַבְעֵרָה מְבַלַּחַת, אֵין־עֹז־וְאֵימָה,
    וּלְכַבּוֹתָהּ בָּאֵשׁ כִּמְרִי מְזִמָּה וָבֶגֶד?

אֵי אִישׁ־חָזוֹן? הֵן כַּגָּמָל לוּט־הָעֵינַיִם
    יָסֹבּוּ בְּנֵי־אָדָם כְּטוֹחֲנִים לַלֶּחֶם:
וּשְׂרִיד זֵרְעוֹן לֹא יִמָּצֵא בֵּין הָרֵחַיִם, –
    סוֹבֵב תַּחְתָּיו אָדָם וּבְאוֹן נְטוּי הַשֶּׁכֶם!

גְּאוֹן־הַשָּׁוְא הַזֶּה, יְגִיעַ אֵין־תְּבוּאוֹת;
    אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ לֹא יֹאמַר: חֲזַק, שָׁלוֹם!
לוּ חֹרֶב־יוֹם אֶחָד רַגְלַיִם יַךְ פְּצוּעוֹת
    וְקֶרַח גַּם אֶחָד בְּלַיְלָה אֵין־חֲלוֹם.

וְאִישׁ רַק דַּם־פְּצָעָיו יַצִּיג לְרַאֲוָה:
    הַבִּיטוּ, הָעוֹבְרִים – אָדֹם יוֹתֵר דָּמִי!
וּמִסָּבִיב הָעָם אֲחוּז־הַזְּוָעָה
    נָס, גַּם חָדַל מִשְּׁאֹל: מִי יְנַחֵם עַמִּי?

Too late the comforter arrived, too late redemption's day.
All the seers are busy sowing among thorns.
Weary Messiah trudges on the bogged roadway —
Those who await him, wound his limbs with stones.

To Tarshish*

I

An elegy does not raise its wistful tone in downpour of southern shine,
Even wrapped in porous cloud, sheer as ashes vitreous.
Why then have you stirred in me, my heart, as my day declines,
Insisting on young, plaintive song, wailing like a flute breaking forth.
In the distances at the end of the earth the pines sough.
In the distances at the end of the earth the years are done.
Why then have you wakened, heart of my heart, and never hush?

Sivan's* heat wave set shrinking backward the sick sea.
And the green mold lay bare on a jagged-toothed cliff.
In such enchanted dusklight Jonah once rushed falteringly
To the boat, away from a God arousing, yet not quenching, thirst.
He too yearned for the sea, a fish hauled up by the hook,
Yet, never did he shatter his weary head against the rock:
To Tarshish, gullible heart, still hoping on the brink of the abyss!

אַחַר בּוֹא הַמְנַחֵם, אַחַר יוֹם הַגְּאֻלָּה:
טְרוּדִים חוֹזִים כֻּלָּם, זוֹרְעִים אֶל הַקּוֹצִים.
יָגֵעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ בִּמְסִלָּה כְּבוּלָה –
וּמְיַחֲלָיו בָּאֲבָנִים כָּל אֵבָרָיו פּוֹצְעִים.

תַּרְשִׁישָׁה

א

אֶלֶגְיָה לֹא תַעְגֵּם קוֹלָהּ בְּשֶׁפֶךְ אוֹר דְּרוֹמִי,
לוּ גַּם לוּט עָב תָּחוּחַ, דַּק כְּאֵפֶר הַדְּלִיל.
מַה־כֵּן אֵפוֹא נִרְעַשְׁתָּ בִּי, לִבִּי, בִּנְטוֹת יוֹמִי
וְשַׁוַּע שִׁיר תִּדְרוֹשׁ צָעִיר, יִבָּקַע, יֵבְךְּ כֶּחָלִיל?
בַּמֶּרְחַקִּים, בִּקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ, יָשֹׁקּוּ אֳרָנִים,
בַּמֶּרְחַקִּים, בִּקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ, תַּמּוּ הַשָּׁנִים.
מָה הֱקִיצֹתָ, לֶב־לִבִּי, עַד לֹא תִדְמֶה כָּלִיל?

שְׁרַב־סִיוָן הִרְתִּיעַ יָם חוֹלֶה אֲחוֹרַנִּית
וְנֶחֶשְׂפָה הַיְרוֹקָה עַל שֶׁן־צוּק נַעֲוָה.
בְּאוֹר־עַרְבַּיִם מְכֻשָּׁף כֹּה אָץ מְעַדְנִית
יוֹנָה אֶל הַסְּפִינָה מֵאֵל מַצְמִיא וְלֹא יַרְוֶה.
גַּם הוּא לַיָּם עָרַג, דָּג הֶעֱלָתוּ הַחַכָּה,
וְאֶת רֹאשׁוֹ יָגֵעַ אֶל הַסֶּלַע לֹא בָקַע:
תַּרְשִׁישָׁה, לֵב פּוֹתֶה, עַל פִּי הַתְּהוֹם עוֹד יְקַוֶּה!

Oh, Tarshish mine, you are there this moment, now
Your pine forests this moment expect me still.
In black-winged winter, in thicknesses of snow
The lean wolf, too desperate to howl, wanders the slopes of your hills.
But when the ever wistful, strange summer burgeons in you again,
I return to the coolness of your lap with the returning flock of cranes
Who from afar your murmuring lake reeds smell.

II

Your summer is ever Indian summer. Forever unscarred
Is your crystalline horizon, smoky sheerness that dying crystallized
In withheld wonder. A melancholy fruitfulness showered
From the coolness of your azure sheen at noon, a moist tremor waves
In it, as if the night had been washed in unheard rain.
You are a translucent depth and like seaweed your birch leaves wane
Within the mournful light that kisses them unstirred.

Oh that I might dip alive again, within your mournful light.
And yet, bereft of understanding press like drunken mole
My face within your tangled grass that wormwood blights
My senses till they swoon! Within you goes astray even the cautious soul:
But my faltering step will recognize again its print
Blood-spattered in your soil. Like a hungry rabbit may I sniff
Again the path of my destruction giddied by my blinded sight.

תַּרְשִׁישׁ שֶׁלִּי, הֲלֹא יֶשְׁךְ עַתָּה, בְּרֶגַע זֶה,
וְיַעַר־אֳרָנַיִךְ בְּרֶגַע זֶה לִי יְפַלֵּל.
בְּחֹרֶף שְׁחוֹר־כְּנָפַיִם, בְּעַב־הַשֶּׁלֶג, זְאֵב רָזֶה
בְּמִדְרוֹנֵי הָרַיִךְ נָע, נוֹאָשׁ גַּם מִיַּלֵּל.
וְקַיִץ כִּי יָנוּב בָּךְ, עַגְמוּמִי תָּמִיד וָזָר,
אָשׁוּב אֶל קֹר חֵיקֵךְ עִם עֵדֶר עֲגוּרִים, חָזַר
בַּהֲרִיחוֹ רָחוֹק סוּף־אֲגַמַּיִךְ הַמְּמַלֵּל.

ב

קֵיצֵךְ קֵץ הַהֹדִים. עַד הָעוֹלָם לֹא יִפָּגֵם
אָפְקֵךְ גָּבֵשׁ, דֹּק הֶעָשָׁן גָּוַע וַיִּתְבַּדְלַח
מֵעֹצֶר פֶּלֶא. עַד עוֹלָם יִרְעַף פִּרְיוֹן עָגֵם
מִצֶּנֶן זִיו תְּכֶלְתֵּךְ בַּצָּהֳרַיִם וְרַעַד לַח
בָּהּ יִתְנַחֵשׁ, כְּאִלּוּ גַּם הַלַּיְלָה רֻחֲצָה
בְּגֶשֶׁם לֹא נִשְׁמָע. צוּלָה שְׁקוּפָה אַתְּ וְכָאַצָּה
עֲלֵי־לִבְנֵךְ מְקַלְּשִׁים בִּיגוֹן אוֹר יְשָׁקֵם.

הוֹ, מִי יִתְּנֵנִי שׁוּב טוֹבֵל עֵרֶן וּנְטוּל־בִּינָה
בִּיגוֹן־אוֹרֵךְ וְאֶכְבְּשָׁה פָּנַי כַּחֲפַרְפֶּרֶת
שְׁכוּרָה בְּצֶמֶת עִשְׂבָּתֵךְ, הַמַּלְעִינָה
חוּשַׁי עַד הִתְעַלֵּף! תּוֹעָה בָּךְ נֶפֶשׁ גַּם נִזְהֶרֶת
וְכַף־רַגְלִי כּוֹשְׁלָה תָּשׁוּב תַּכִּיר אֶת עֲקֵבָהּ
עָקֹב מִדָּם בְּאַדְמָתֵךְ. כְּאַרְנֶבֶת רְעֵבָה
אָרַח שְׁבִיל־אָבְדָנִי וּתְסַחְרְרֵנִי הָעִוֶּרֶת.

Hunger for life stores within you each moment's essence,
As if in you the God himself crumbled to atoms
And moment after moment gulps the wine-lettings of his body.
Your summer is short; your spotted flies have grown so wise
Coupling in the hair of my arm in a seizure of intoxication. ח;
Frog folk heat their virility all day;
And slowly returned atoms of the God become unities.*

But I who stalk about in a labyrinth of devious folly known
To the deniers of earth, and all my days regarded my soul
As the eye of a willfully barren God, was sucked down
Into the whirlpool of lusts storming your coolness,
A cheat caught in his deception. The erotic grasshopper leapt
About as if he had vanquished me, the whippoorwill's plaint
For its mate in the gloom bewails only the fate of my blood.

Oh fate of bloods yearning in the snort of an animal slaughtered,
When my own day was so ripe, how did your crying ensnare me?
I decreed annihilation upon my soul, buried it embalmed,
And here a bony arm of ancestors unknown reached for the pestle
To crush me, even myself, in the mortar of survival.
Oh ancestor of holy ancestors, be cursed for the revival
In me of your capricious will to be, night after night you lurk for me.

רְעַב־חַיִּים גּוֹנֵז קִרְבֵּךְ כָּל רֶגַע מְרֻכָּז,
כְּאִלּוּ הִתְפּוֹרֵר הָאֱלֹהִים בָּךְ לִפְרָדִים
וְרֶגַע רֶגַע יְעַלַּע אֶת יֵין גּוּפוֹ מִקּוֹ.
קָצַר קֵיצֵךְ וּמְאֹד חָכְמוּ זְבוּבַיִךְ מְנֻקָּדִים,
הַמִּזְדַּוְּגִים בְּשְׂעַר־יָדִי בְּחֶתֶף שִׁכְרוֹנָם.
עַם הַצְּפַרְדֵּעַ יוֹם תָּמִים יְיַחֲמוּ אוֹנָם
וְשָׁבוּ אַט פְּרָדֵי־הָאֵל לִהְיוֹת לַאֲחָדִים.

וְאָנֹכִי, הַמִּתְשׁוֹטֵט בִּמְבוֹךְ סִכְלוּת פְּתַלְתֹּלֶת
לְנֻזִירֵי אֶרֶץ וְאֶת נַפְשִׁי דִּמִּיתִי כָּל יָמַי
עֵין אֵל, עָקָר לָדַעַת, נְצוּדוֹתִי בְּמַעַרְבֹּלֶת
הַחֲשָׁקִים הַמַּסְעִירִים אֶת צִנְּתֵךְ, רַמַּאי
נִתְפַּשׂ בְּרְמִיָּתוֹ. נִתַּר חַרְגֹּל תַּאַוְתָנִי
כְּאִלּוּ הוּא נִצְּחַנִי וַאֲנִיַּת הַקּוֹלָנִי
אֶל בַּת־זוּגוֹ בָּאֹפֶל תְּתַנֶּה גּוֹרַל־דָּמִי.

גּוֹרַל דָּמִים עוֹרְגִים בְּנַחֲרַת בְּהֵמָה שְׁחוּטָה,
אֵיךְ לְכָדַתְנִי שַׁוְעָתֵךְ בִּנְכוֹן יוֹמִי שֶׁלִּי?
כָּרֵת גָּזַרְתִּי עַל נַפְשִׁי, קְבַרְתִּיהָ חֲנוּטָה,
וְיַד אַב מֵאָבוֹת שָׁלְחָה גְרוּמָה אֶל הָעֱלִי
לִכְתּוֹשׁ אוֹתִי גַּם אֲנִי בְּמַכְתֵּשׁ הַהַשְׁאָרָה.
אָב מֵאָבוֹת קְדוֹשִׁים! אָרוּר אַתָּה, כִּי נִנְעֲרָה
בִּי אַוָּתְךָ לִהְיוֹת וְלַיְלָה לַיְלָה תּוֹחֶל־לִי.

Who am I to curse and who am I to bless?
The river of my blood is but a vat surging with ancient wines.
Whose mouth of all my ancestors, in my thirst, now sucks your flesh
Sweet to giddiness, oh woman, with a youthful surge not mine.
Not mine? Whose burning head cooled invisible on your breast which trembled
Small like a banished bird and weeping sang in dread
Of mercies from my hand groping toward your rounded thigh?

And grandmother shrouded in white, so like a bride,
Wrapped in her veil, upon my threshold silent lay
Within the pallor of my night and heard the howl
Rolling in my throat. One moment more,
The bereaved moon will take its sheen from your blue lips,
Your little body will crawl back into the darkness of its heaven —
But grandfather into the mortar yet will cast my panicked soul.

III

If only I could return again, at my day's end to seek
At evening, my Tarshish, the shadows of your trees
Like fingers caressing your darkening peaks —
I should not return God's chosen one who learned to see,
With acceptance in his heart, compulsive existence's abyss.
Ashamed to call the mosquito, brother, like a man passing through,
A man whose shadow will not recognize him, I would yet be drawn to you.

מִי אָנֹכִי כִּי אֲקַלֵּל וּמִי כִּי אֲבָרֵךְ?
נְהַר־דָּמַי רַק יֶקֶב הַמֵּשִׁיק יֵינוֹת־קְדוּמִים.
פִּי מִי מֵאֲבוֹתַי בִּצְמָאוֹנִי יָנַק בְּשָׂרֵךְ,
אִשָּׁה, מָתוֹק עַד מֶסֶךְ עִוְעִים, בְּסַעַר־עֲלוּמִים
לֹא לִי, לֹא לִי? רֹאשׁ מִי יוֹקֵד שָׁדֵךְ סָמוּי צִנֵּן,
מַרְתִּית קָטָן כְּעוֹף נִדָּח, וּבְכִי מִי זֶה רִנֵּן
בְּפַחַד רַחֲמֵי־יָדַי לִקְרַאת חַמּוּק יָרֵךְ?

וְסָבָתִי, צְחוֹרָה בְּתַכְרִיכֶיהָ כְּכַלָּה
עוֹטֶפֶת הִינוּמָה, דוּמָם גּוֹהֶרֶת עַל הַסַּף
בְּחַוְרוּרִית לֵילִי, מַאֲזִינָה לַיְלָלָה
הַמִּצְטַנֶּפֶת בִּגְרוֹנִי. עוֹד רֶגַע וְאָסַף
יָרֵחַ שְׁכוֹל נָגְהוֹ, סָבָה, מֵעַל שְׂפָתֵךְ כְּחֻלָּה,
גְּוִיָּתֵךְ קְטַנָּה תִּזְחַל אֶל מַאֲפֵל זְבוּלָהּ —
וְסָב אֶל הַמַּכְתֵּשׁ יָטִיל נַפְשִׁי הַנִּבְהָלָה.

ג

לוּ שַׁבְתִּי עוֹד הַפַּעַם, בַּעֲרוֹב יוֹמִי, לִרְאוֹת
אֶת צִלְלֵי עֵצַיִךְ, הָהּ, תַּרְשִׁישׁ שֶׁלִּי, עִם עֶרֶב
לוֹטְפִים כְּאֶצְבָּעוֹת צַלְעֵי־הָרַיִךְ מַשְׁחִירוֹת —
לֹא בְּחִיר הָאֱלֹהִים אָשׁוּב אֲשֶׁר לָמַד, בְּלִי סֶרֶב
בִּלְבָבוֹ, הַבֵּט תְּהוֹם קִיּוּמוֹ הַהֶכְרָחִי.
כְּאִישׁ חֵלֵכָה, לַיַּתּוּשׁ יֵבוֹשׁ מִקְּרוֹא: אָחִי,
אֵלַיִךְ אֶנָּהֶה, כְּאִישׁ צִלּוֹ לֹא יַכִּירוֹ.

And he recalls and does not recall his past's glory.
The roar of his life — he scents northern rain.
(Motherland, do not condemn me! How much I probe my heart,
I scatter its outcry to cloud form, vain enchantment,
Does it foretell on the pale horizon summer's rain?
Your transparent light — do not condemn me — starts like a barrier
Between me and, in its dearness, your heart's pain.)

My heart, also paining, does not yearn for tranquillity,
Tribute its meager remnant to the distance it will bear away.
I withdrew far from man, therefore I was orphaned of God,
And my soul does not know to what or to whom its tax to pay.
I have only a daughter. When frightened at night she wakes,
Leaping to my flesh from the murky deeps,
Woe, the death of my calamity, remains forever incomplete.

In her imagined safety in me my daughter will forget her fright
And my sin shall never die, that I bore her.
Tomorrow on the shore, her blind heart will be refreshed by a shell,
Petrified sea blossom, whose veins her tiny hand will lift
Drunk with love, to her mouth.
Far, far is the night. Father alone, O lovely daughter of my plight,
Will gather its black echoes in day's sly roar.

וְהוּא זוֹכֵר וְלֹא זוֹכֵר תִּפְאֶרֶת עֲבָרוֹ
וְנַהֲמַת־חַיָּיו – הֵרִיחַ גֶּשֶׁם בַּצָּפוֹן.
(אַל תַּרְשִׁיעֵנִי, הַמּוֹלֶדֶת! לִבִּי מָה אֶחְקְרוֹ
וּכְשָׁוְא מִקְסָם אֱזָרֶה אֶת שַׁוְעָתוֹ אֶל עָב אֹפֶן,
הַמִּתְנַבֵּא בְּאֹפֶק חִוַּרְיָן לְגֶשֶׁם קַיִץ?
אַל תַּרְשִׁיעֵנִי, כִּי אוֹרֵךְ זָגִיג רוֹטֵט כַּחַיִץ
בֵּינִי וּבֵין לִבֵּךְ דְּוַי בְּעֶצֶם יְקָרוֹ).

לִבִּי, דַּוָּי גַּם הוּא, לֹא כְהוֹמֶה אֶל הַמַּרְגּוֹעַ
אֶת פְּלֵטָתוֹ דַלָּה לַמֶּרְחַקִּים תְּרוּמָה יִשָּׂא.
רָחַקְתִּי מֵאָדָם, עַל כֵּן יָתַמְתִּי מֵאֱלֹהַּ,
וְלֹא תֵדַע נַפְשִׁי לְמִי וּלְמָה תְּשַׁלֵּם מִסָּהּ.
רַק בַּת יֵשׁ לִי. וְעֵת תָּקִיץ מִפַּחַד בַּלֵּילוֹת,
חוֹרֶגֶת אֶל בְּשָׂרִי מִן הַמְּצוּלוֹת הָאֲפֵלוֹת,
אֵילִילָה: עֲנוּתִי עַד נֶצַח לֹא תִתַּם לִגְוֹעַ.

פַּחְדָּהּ תִּשְׁכַּח בִּתִּי בְּחָסוּתָהּ בִּי הַמְדֻמָּה
וְלֹא יָמוּת חֶטְאִי לָנֶצַח, כִּי יְלִדְתִּיהָ.
צֶדֶף עַל הַחוֹף מָחָר יְרַנֵּן לִבָּהּ סוּמָא,
פֶּרַח־יָם אֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר תַּגִּישׁ עוֹרְקָיו אֶל פִּיהָ
יָדָהּ חוּמָה, קְטַנְטֹנֶת וְשִׁכְּרָה מֵאַהֲבָה.
רָחוֹק, רָחוֹק הַלַּיְלָה. רַק אַבָּא, בַּת אוֹנִי נָאוָה,
הֲדָיו שְׁחוֹרִים יְקַלֵּט בְּנַהֲרַת־יוֹם עֵרְמָה.

Before his strange form terrifies you, your father shall be gone
And melt from your heart like fear — never was night.
I will heap mute sparks, your shells, until your basket's filled
And tomorrow your hands shall burn, there is work enough still.
While yet your day remains undimmed, your sky unclouded,
I shall kneel upon a northern mountain, a pauper unpitied and unknown,
I shall listen to a horse wandering in the dark, tenderness done.

IV

Black shall abound the primeval clod's tranquillity
In the corn furrow that divides after the rain.
My soul, my soul, now you can die for you have seen
The stork fluttering dew from its wing.
At dawn the farmer will bend to the grain, primal man,
Always as he touches the earth, primal man,
And the stork measures his long shadow silently.

From across the mountains spurts the mute sun,
A pine tree burdened with days, murmuring with night, quiet grows.
Suddenly a black cow will snuff you down
And all at once, disturbed, leave you alone.
My soul, my soul, you are fortunate to be abandoned so.
Beasts of the field sense in you the one wandered
Away from God, from bosom wife, from hope that comes and goes.

יָסוּף אָבִיךְ, בְּטֶרֶם זָר צַלְמוֹ יְבַהֲלֵךְ,
וּמִלִּבֵּךְ יָמוֹג כְּפַחַד־לַיְלָה לֹא הָיָה.
צְדָפַיִךְ, זְקִיּוֹת אִלְּמוֹת, אֲעָרֵי עַד מְלֹא סַלֵּךְ
וּלְמָחֳרַת תְּלַהֵט יָדֵךְ עוֹד הַמְּלָאכָה דַיָּהּ.
עַד לֹא יִכְהֶה יַמֵּךְ וְשַׁחְקֵךְ לֹא יְעֻנַּן,
אֶכְרַע עַל הַר צְפוֹנִי, דַּל לֹא־נִכָּר וְלֹא־חֻנָּן,
אָרַח לֵחוֹ, אַקְשִׁיב לְסוּס בָּאֹפֶל יְהַלֵּךְ.

ד

שְׁחוֹרָה תִּשְׁפַּע שַׁלְוַת־הַמֶּגְרָפוֹת הָעִלָּאִית
אַחַר הַגֶּשֶׁם בְּמַעֲנִית־תִּירָס מִסְתָּעֲפָה.
נַפְשִׁי, נַפְשִׁי! עַתָּה תוּכְלִי לָמוּת, כִּי כֵן רָאִית
הַחֲסִידָה מְנַעֲרָה הַטַּל מֵעַל כְּנָפָהּ.
רִאשׁוֹן אָדָם, יִגְחַן אִכָּר עִם שַׁחַר לַקָּמָה,
רִאשׁוֹן אָדָם תָּמִיד בְּמַגָּעוֹ בָּאֲדָמָה,
וַחֲסִידָה צִלּוֹ אָרֹךְ מוֹדֶדֶת חֲשָׁאִית.

מֵעֵבֶר לֶהָרִים תָּגַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ הַדְּמוּמָה
וְאֹרֶן עוּל יָמִים, הוֹמֶה מִלַּיְלָה, יֵרָגַע.
פָּרָה שְׁחוֹרָה לְפֶתַע בָּךְ תְּזוֹרֵר לְפִי תֻמָּהּ
וּלְפֶתַע תִּתְעַשֵּׁת, תֵּשֹׁט מֵעָלַיִךְ בִּדְאָגָה.
נַפְשִׁי, נַפְשִׁי! אַשְׁרַיִךְ כִּי הָיִית כֹּה גַּלְמוּדָה,
עַד בֶּהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ בָּךְ תָּחוּשׁ אֶת הַמְּנֻדָּה
מֵאֵל, מֵאֵשֶׁת־חֵיק וּמִתִּקְוָה נָעָה־נָדָה.

Fortunate is the man without strength to hope who hopeless is.
Fortunate is he who has been left empty that he may not be eaten by shame.
My heart belongs to the dark moist clods of the field,
Anguished with longing for extinction, with fleeing from pain,
If only as the sun's heat is lost in the lake among the reeds
I recall and do not recall the shells on the hidden shore
And the mistaken child that shall not know her father's twisting paths.

אַשְׁרֵי אִישׁ אֵין־תִּקְוָה וְאֵין־אוֹנִים גַּם מְקַוּוֹת.
אַשְׁרֵי מִי רֵיק הֻצַּג וְלֹא יֹאכְלֶנּוּ הַקָּלוֹן.
לִבִּי לְמֶגְרְפוֹת שָׂדֶה, הַמַּשְׁחִירוֹת רָווֹת,
נִכְאָב מִבְּרֹחַ מִן הַכְּאֵב, מִשְּׁאוֹף לַחִדָּלוֹן,
לוּ גַּם כְּחֹם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאֲגַם אָבַד, בַּסּוּף,
וְאֶזְכְּרָה־לֹא־אֶזְכְּרָה צְדָפִים עַל חוֹף חָשׂוּף
וּבַת תּוֹעָה וְלֹא תֵּדַע דַּרְכֵי אָב נַעֲווֹת.

Seventy-five Are My Abyssed Forests

Seventy-five are my abyssed forests,
Exposed and silent under one white covering
Now in the round contracted dark. How will the gold bird*
Know to weave her twisting path in sun's blue
Down to the greyness of my forest's round contracted dark,
Under one white covering, breathing and dead?
Seventy-five are my forests that are being choked
Now under the white cover. All the days
Their sap filled and disheveled branches rustled, cried out
For this golden bird that delayed to break a path
To their imploring, that in the distances of place
And time tarried to come. In sun's blue her woven path
was twisted to the place where
Like a harp my storming forests murmured for her.
How then shall she now, my golden bird, find her way
Into the depths of my shaken forests that expected only her:
Into the abyss of my forests that yet expect only her
Beneath the one white covering, breathing and dead?

שִׁבְעִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה יַעֲרוֹתַי הַמִּתְהָמִים

שִׁבְעִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה יַעֲרוֹתַי הַמִּתְהָמִים,
פְּרוּמִים דְּמוּמִים, מִתַּחַת לְכִסּוּי לָבָן אֶחָד
עַתָּה בַּמַּאְפֵל מְכֻרְבָּלִים. אֵיכָה תֵּדַע
צִפּוֹר־זָהָב אֱרוֹג עָקְמָן דַּרְכָּהּ בִּתְכֵלֶת־שֶׁמֶשׁ
אֶל שֵׂיב יַעֲרוֹתַי, הַמְכֻרְבָּלִים בַּמַּאְפֵל
מִתַּחַת לְכִסּוּי לָבָן אֶחָד, נוֹשֵׁם וָמֵת?
שִׁבְעִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה יַעֲרוֹתַי, הַמְּחֻנָּקִים
עַתָּה מִתַּחַת לְכִסּוּי לָבָן, כָּל הַיָּמִים
אִוְשׁוּ שִׁוְּעוּ פַּרְעוֹת־עֳפָאֵיהֶם מְלֻשָּׁדוֹת
אֶל זוֹ צִפּוֹר־זָהָב, שֶׁאֶחֱרָה הַבְקִיעַ דֶּרֶךְ
אֶל שַׁוְעָתָן, שֶׁבּוֹשְׁשָׁה בְּרָחֳקֵי מָקוֹם
וּזְמַן מְבוֹא, מִשְּׁזוֹר דַּרְכָּהּ נִפְתַּל בִּתְכֵלֶת־שֶׁמֶשׁ
לְמָקוֹם הָמוּ שָׁם כְּעוּגָב לָהּ יַעֲרֵי סְעָרוֹ.
אֵיכָה תִּמְצָא עַתָּה דַּרְכָּהּ צִפּוֹר־זָהָב שֶׁלִּי
אֶל עֹמֶק יַעֲרֵי הַמְנֹעָרִים, רַק לָהּ פִּלְּלוּ,
אֶל תְּהוֹם יַעֲרוֹתַי, הַמְפַלְּלִים רַק לָהּ עֲדַיִן
מִתַּחַת לְכִסּוּי לָבָן אֶחָד, נוֹשֵׁם וָמֵת?

Like This Before You

Like this before you, just as I am:
Not charming, not painted with pink and blue*
But wild and rebellious, very bad,
So do I wish to stand before you.

Thus and thus is the measure of my height,
And so my life upon earth must be.
A larger measure for my soul's ascent,
Wandering silent it escapes its captivity.

My words will not soar me up to the heights
My words melt, suddenly frightened away.
Is it so, is it so I will speak to you,
I who am dying from day to day?

From day to day, dry land and the sea
Arise and shine like visions in sleep:
Like white highways from nothing to nothing
They stretch through the blue of heights and deeps.

I shall not be, I am not already,
Across the boundary I flutter my course.

כָּזֹאת לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּמוֹת שֶׁהִנְנִי...

כָּזֹאת לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּמוֹת שֶׁהִנְנִי:
לֹא כְּחָל, לֹא שָׂרָק, לֹא פִּרְכּוּס וָחֵן,
אַךְ פְּרוּעָה, סוֹרֵרָה וְרָעָה מְאֹד –
וְכָךְ לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנִי רוֹצָה לַעֲמוֹד.

כָּךְ וָכָךְ מִדָּה לְשִׁעוּר קוֹמָתִי,
כָּךְ וָכָךְ דּוֹרִי עַל זוֹ אֲדָמָה.
מִדָּה יְתֵרָה לַעֲלִיַּת־נִשְׁמָתִי
תַּחֲרֹג מִשִּׁבְיָהּ וְתָנוּד בִּדְמָמָה.

וְלֹא יַמְרִיאֵנִי שִׂיחִי אֶל עָל –
שִׂיחִי כְּמִגְמוּג מִפַּחַד פִּתְאֹם.
הֲכָכָה, הֲכָכָה אֲדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ
אֲנִי הַגּוֹוַעַת מִיּוֹם אֱלֵי יוֹם?

מִיּוֹם אֱלֵי יוֹם יַבֶּשֶׁת וָיָם
עוֹלִים וְקוֹרְנִים כְּחֶזְיוֹן חֲלוֹם,
כִּדְרָכִים לְבָנִים מֵאַיִן לְאַיִן
מוּשְׁכִים בִּתְכֵלֶת מְצוּלָה וָרוֹם.

וַאֲנִי כְּבָר לֹא אֶהְיֶה, אֵינֶנִּי מִכְּבָר,
וּמְנַפְנְפָה דַּרְכִּי מֵעֵבֶר לַגְּבוּל.

Here and beyond is the sin not atoned,
The punishment, vengeance, reward and remorse?

I stand before you, just as I am.
Wild and rebellious, I bitterly cry.
Harsh and barren the weeping enfolds me.
It is for my Self who shall not be I.

הֲמִזֶּה וּבָזֶה לֹא יְכֻפַּר הַחֵטְא,
הָעֹנֶשׁ, הַנְּקָמָה, חֲרָטָה וּגְמוּל?

וְהִנְנִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֲנִי,
פְּרוּעָה, סוֹרֵרָה וְהוֹמָה בְּמָרִי.
וּסְבִיבִי מִתְעַטֵּף בְּכִי קָשֶׁה וְעָקָר
עַל עַצְמִי שֶׁלֹּא אֶהְיֶה מִמֶּנִּי אֲנִי...

The Distance Spills Itself

The distance spills itself, grows blue and shining,
Silver lights like sickles are in the field.
Who beguiles me, as if calling and answering
My heart that longs like a bird of the wild.

Sadness such sadness without reason or substance
Like mists of a river soaring aloft.
The mezuzah* of my house I will kiss and leave
Like the beggar that entered and abruptly left.

I will meet someone, he will not sense my coming.
The beasts of the field will smell me so slow.
The lanes will hum like bells toward me
And I shall whisper, one with my soul,

Oh let me, let me walk alone,
Hear the "Adoration,"* answer "Amen."
Scorched by holiness, awe, mystery and grace
I suddenly whisper, "Blessed be Your Name."

Sadness such sadness. Full distance stretches,
It reminds me of what is beyond the boundary.
I shall ask not-to-be, thus to cease
On the threshold of the boundless, atone silently.

מִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ מֶרְחָק...

מִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ מֶרְחָק, מִתְכַּחֵל וְנוֹהֵר,
אוֹרוֹת כֶּסֶף כְּמַגָּלִים בַּכָּר.
מִי מְפַתֶּה, כְּקוֹרֵא וְעוֹנֶה,
לִלְבָבִי הוֹמֶה כְּצִפּוֹר הַבָּר?

עֶצֶב, עֶצֶב לְלֹא חֵקֶר וָשַׁחַר,
כְּאֵדֵי נָהָר מִתַּמְּרִים לָרוּם.
מְזוּזַת בֵּיתִי הִנֵּה אֶשַּׁק וְאֵצֵא
כְּעָנִי שֶׁנִּכְנַס וְיָצָא פִּתְאֹם.

אֶפְגֹּשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָחוּשׁ בְּגִשְׁתִּי,
חַיַּת־שָׂדֶה תָּרִיחַ בִּי אַט,
יֶהֱמוּ שְׁבִילִים כְּזוֹגִים לִקְרָאתִי
וַאֲנִי אַחַת לְנַפְשִׁי אֶלְאַט:

תְּנוּ לִי, תְּנוּ לִי לְבַדִּי לָלֶכֶת,
לִשְׁמֹעַ „קְדֻשָּׁה", לְהַגִּיד „אָמֵן",
לִלְחוֹשׁ פֶּתַע „יְהִי שִׁמְךָ מְבֹרָךְ",
צְרוּבַת קְדֻשָּׁה, סוֹד יִרְאָה וָחֵן.

עֶצֶב עֶצֶב. מְלֹא מֶרְחָק מוֹתֵחַ,
כְּזֹכֵר לְמַה שֶּׁמֵּעֵבֶר לִגְבוּל.
כָּכָה לַחְדֹּל, לֹא־לִהְיוֹת אֶשְׁאָלָה
בְּהִתְחַטְּאוּת דְּמוּיָה עַל מִפְתַּן אֵין־גְּבוּל...

Prayer

Forgive me, you, whom we called by name,
You, the revealed, who shine out beyond.
I am not to blame, I am not to blame,
That the language of words stammers, confused.

Many is the time we tried to converse
With all of your creatures — but they did not understand.
Perhaps we were not born in the desert even then,
And was He not our father — He who was first?

For then when morning hairy and red,
The soul of night first trampled down,
Also my father, the ancient one, could
Bleat out his words like ram to ram.

The rain to grass and thunder to lamb
Spoke and listened to Abel and Cain —
What more shall we do, what shall we do
We, who speak words to the naught?

Forgive me, you, whom we called by name,
Forgive my words, my confused spirit too.
I am not to blame, I am not to blame —
Teach me to bleat to your creatures like you.

תְּפִלָּה

סְלַח לִי, אַתָּה שֶׁכִּנּוּךָ בְּשֵׁם,
אַתָּה הַנִּגְלֶה, הַזּוֹרֵם מִנֶּגֶד.
אֵינֶנִּי אָשֵׁם, אֵינֶנִּי אָשֵׁם.
כִּי שְׂפַת הַמִּלִּים נְבוֹכָה וְעִלֶּגֶת.

רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים כְּבָר נִסִּינוּ דַּבֵּר
אֶל כָּל יְצוּרֶיךָ – אַךְ הֵם לֹא הֵבִינוּ.
אוּלַי לֹא נוֹלַדְנוּ גַּם אָז בַּמִּדְבָּר,
וְזֶה שֶׁהָיָה הָרִאשׁוֹן – לֹא אָבִינוּ?

כִּי אָז, עֵת הַבֹּקֶר, שָׂעִיר וְאַדְמוֹן,
דָּרַס רִאשׁוֹנָה אֶת נִצְחוֹ שֶׁל הַלַּיִל,
יָדַע גַּם אָבִי, גַּם אָבִי הַקַּדְמוֹן
לִגְעוֹת אֶת מִלָּיו כְּמוֹ אַיִל אֶל אַיִל.

אָז גֶּשֶׁם אֶל דֶּשֶׁא וְרַעַם אֶל שֶׂה
דִּבְּרוּ וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ אֶל הֶבֶל וְקַיִן. –
וּמַה נַּעֲשֶׂה עוֹד, מַה נַּעֲשֶׂה
אֲנַחְנוּ, דּוֹבְרֵי הַמִּלִּים אֶל הָאַיִן?

סְלַח לִי, אַתָּה, שֶׁכִּנּוּךָ בְּשֵׁם,
סְלַח לְמִלַּי, לְנַפְשִׁי שֶׁנְּבוֹכָה.
אֵינֶנִּי אָשֵׁם, אֵינֶנִּי אָשֵׁם – –
עָזְרֵנִי לִגְעוֹת לִיצוּרֶיךָ, כָּמוֹךָ.

Tiller of the Soil

Camel and plow. The sharp blade
Wearies cleaving clod from clod.
Never before was the world so one,
All eternities in that moment joined.

This is hint of murder,
This is plunged blade,
This is Cain who splits the clod's unity.
Never before was the distance so small
Between man
And camel
And sky.

Shepherd

This expanse that spreads its nostrils wide.
This height that yearns to you overhead.
Light spilling the milk's white.
Fragrance of wool. Fragrance of bread.

At the feet of the sheep and man that listens,
In the water trough is the lapping tune —

עוֹבֵד אֲדָמָה

גָּמָל – וּמַחֲרֶשֶׁת. הַלַּהַב הֶחָד
הַפֶּרֶד מִתְיַגֵּעַ בֵּין רֶגֶב לְרֶגֶב
מֵעוֹדוֹ לֹא הָיָה הָעוֹלָם כֹּה אֶחָד,
וְכָל הַנְּצָחִים חֲבוּקִים תּוֹךְ הָרֶגַע.

זֶה רֶמֶז לְרֶצַח.
זֶה לַהַב נִדְחָק.
זֶה קַיִן אַחְדוּת־שֶׁבָּרֶגֶב־מַבְקִיעַ.
מֵעוֹלָם לֹא הָיָה כֹּה מְעַט הַמֶּרְחָק
בֵּין אָדָם –
וְגָמָל –
וְרָקִיעַ.

רוֹעֵה צֹאן

הָרֹחַב הַזֶּה, הַמְּפַשֵּׂק נְחִירָיו.
הַגֹּבַהּ הַזֶּה, הַכָּמֵהַּ אֵלֶיךָ.
הָאוֹר, הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ לַבְנוּת הֶחָלָב.
וְרֵיחַ הַצֶּמֶר. וְרֵיחַ הַלֶּחֶם.

וּלְרֶגֶל הַצֹּאן וְאָדָם, הַקַּשָּׁב
לְרֹן הַלִּקְלוּק בְּתוֹךְ שֹׁקֶת הַמַּיִם, –

Barefoot,
With all his five senses bared,
Morning steps toward noon.

This morn of Creation! Wafts in the fields
Incense from dung, dew drops from grass.
From horizon to horizon: Adam and fields.
From horizon to horizon: Abel and flocks.

Jezrael

Like a caravan of nursing camels with humps in the sky —
God made the hills of Gilboa kneel,
And the fields of Jezrael like young she-camels
Cling to the nipples of those breasts.

Flow, flow, milk of rivers, flowing over the banks.
And the earth (one black pregnant mare!)
Here stretches out her neck, flares her nostrils, snuffs,
For she has smelled water.

Water! Water!
Oh, milk the holiness from your breasts, God!

יָחֵף,
בְּמַחְשׂוֹף כָּל חֲמֵשֶׁת חוּשָׁיו,
פּוֹסֵעַ הַבֹּקֶר אֶל־מוּל צָהֳרַיִם.

זֶה בֹּקֶר־בְּרֵאשִׁית! בַּשָּׂדוֹת יֵאַדֶּה
טְלָלִים מִן הַדֶּשֶׁא. וּקְטֹרֶת הַזֶּבֶל.
מֵאֹפֶק עַד אֹפֶק: אָדָם – וְשָׂדֶה.
מֵאֹפֶק עַד אֹפֶק: הָעֵדֶר – וְהֶבֶל.

יִזְרְעֶאל

כְּאֹרְחַת גְּמַלִּים מֵינִיקוֹת וְדַבְּשׁוֹתֵיהֶן בַּשָּׁמַיִם –
הִבְרִיךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָרֵי הַגִּלְבֹּעַ
וְשַׁדְמוֹת יִזְרְעֶאל כִּבְכָרוֹת רַבּוֹת
אֶל פִּטְמוֹת שָׁדָן צָמְדוּ.

זָב, זָב חֲלֵב הַנְּחָלִים, עוֹבֵר עַל גְּדוֹתָיו.
וְהָאֲדָמָה – (הָהּ, סוּסָה שְׁחוֹרָה, הָרָה!) –
הִנֵּה תִפְשֹׁט צַוָּארָהּ, נְחִירֶיהָ תַּרְחִיב, תִּנְשֹׁף –
כִּי הֵרִיחָה מָיִם.

מַיִם! מַיִם!
הָהּ, חֲלֵב הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִשָּׁדֶיךָ, אֱלֹהִים!

But here also my udders fill with milk —
The human udders!
And my flesh — overflowing breast — protrudes high from the earth.

Oh, clodded fields of Jezrael!
Nurse! Suckle!

Come now, she-camels! horses! man! God!
And I will suckle you —
Because yours are the nipples of my breasts.

*

Like hunchbacked old women here the tents hang out their tongues,
For heavy on the shoulder is the burden's girth.
Man is flesh, and he labors here in holiness,
And bread comes from the earth.

Like a limping lamb here the world is carried
Under the armpit.
Here God's curls descend in the air
Upon every human cheek, caressing it.

Who is great here, who is small
In the kingdom of work and very flesh?
The earth is unrolled here, the scroll of a new testament,
And we — we are twelve!

אַךְ הִנֵּה מָלְאוּ גַּם עֲטִינַי חָלָב –
עֲטִינֵי אָדָם!
וּבְשָׂרִי – שַׁד שׁוֹפֵעַ כֻּלּוֹ – יִגְבַּהּ מִנֵּי אָרֶץ.

הָהּ, שַׁדְמוֹת יִזְרְעֶאל הָרְגוּבוֹת!
יְנַקְנָה! מְצֶינָה!

בֹּאנָה, בְּכָרוֹת! סוּסִים! אָדָם! אֱלֹהִים!
וְאֵינִיקְכֶם –
כִּי לָכֶם פִּטְמוֹת שָׁדַי.

*

כִּזְקֵנוֹת גִּבְּנוֹת פֹּה הִלְחִיתוּ הָאֹהָלִים,
כִּי רַב הַמַּשָּׂא עַל הַשֶּׁכֶם.
הָאָדָם בָּשָׂר הוּא, וְהוּא עָמֵל פֹּה בַּקֹּדֶשׁ, –
וְלָאֲדָמָה – לֶחֶם.

כְּשֶׂיָּה צוֹלֵעָה נִשָּׂא תֵּבֵל פֹּה
מִתַּחַת לְבֵית הַשֶּׁחִי.
בָּאֲוִיר יוֹרְדִים פֹּה תַּלְתַּלֵּי אֱלֹהִים
וּמְלַטְּפִים עַל כָּל לֶחִי.

מִי גָּדוֹל פֹּה? מִי קָטָן
בְּמַלְכוּת הָעֲבוֹדָה וְהַבָּשָׂר?
אֲדָמָה גְּלוּלָה פֹּה – מְגִלַּת בְּרִית־חֲדָשָׁה,
וְאָנוּ – שְׁנֵים־הֶעָשָׂר!

*

Sunrise lows to me from God's stable
Protruding her face and brow.
Here it is — God's image!
He she is — the lowing milk cow!

Already flocks have gone out to the ravine,
Already flocks into the field have gone.
And here my God shepherds his sheep —
And it is the sheep of man.

"Are you hungry?" "No."
"What do you seek for yourself?"
"For myself a pitcher of water and hardtack!
Oh, Brother!
I would be a kid in God's flock!"

*

The earth of Spring grew hairy — a great body.
And my flesh sprouted in its Spring.
So shall I stand naked and covet this hairy body of mine.
Here also the dawn grew hairy — and its hair blond.
Good for you that your grassy body stretches out here,
Man!

*

הַזְּרִיחָה גּוֹעָה לִי מֵרֶפֶת־אֵל
וְאֶת פַּרְצוּפָהּ מְשַׁרְבֶּבֶת. –
הִנֵּהוּ – צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים!
הִנֵּהִי – פָּרָה גּוֹעָה וְהוֹלֶכֶת!

עֲדָרִים יָצְאוּ כְּבָר לַגַּיְא,
עֲדָרִים יָצְאוּ כְּבָר אֶל שָׂדֶם.
וֵאלִי רוֹעֶה צֹאנוֹ פֹּה –
הִיא צֹאן הָאָדָם.

– „רָעַבְתָּ?” – „לֹא!”
– „וּמַה תְּבַקֵּשׁ לְךָ?”
– כַּד מַיִם לִי וּצְנִים!
הָהּ, אָח!
אֱהִי נָא גְּדִי בֵּין גְּדָיֵי אֱלֹהִים!”

*

הִשְׂעִירָה אַדְמַת אָבִיב– גְּוִיָּה גְּדוֹלָה,
וּבְשָׂרִי הִדְשִׁיא בַּאֲבִיבוֹ.
כֹּה אֶעֱמֹד עָרֹם לִי וְחוֹמֵד גּוּפִי זֶה הַשָּׂעִיר,
וְהִנֵּה הִשְׂעִיר גַּם הַשַּׁחַר – וּשְׂעָרוֹ צָהֹב.
טוֹב לְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתְמוֹדֵד פֹּה גְּוִיָּתְךָ הַמְדֻשְׁאָה,
אָדָם!

And goat and sheep will come to crop this tender hair
And bless you: *Meh* — *Meh* — *Meh* —
And God too will come down then like a tender kid
To graze here in your flesh, grassy in its Spring.

*

With shirt wide open, like the open temple gates,
With the toes of my feet I will caress the earth of morning.
Here will I stretch out supine, I will lie in mother's lap.
And all the rivers will come to me,
And every tree will strike its roots in me,
And the God of all the world will nestle close to me whispering with love:
— You! You!...
I will lift up my body in my palms
And beneath the mane of thick tree
On a throne of green grass I will seat —
Man God!
Behold, the sky crowns a great sun on his forehead
Like head phylacteries,*
And trickles prayer into my bosom —
Tear yourself wide open, shirt like the open temple gates.
Let the prayer of every living thing come
Before my flesh that is the good and does the good.

וּבָאוּ עֵז וָשֶׂה לְלַחֵךְ שְׂעָרֵךְ זֶה הָרַעֲנָן
וּבֵרְכוּךְ: מֶה – מֶה – מֶה –
וְיָרַד אָז גַּם אֱלֹהִים כְּטְלֵה־עִזִּים רַךְ
לִרְעוֹת פֹּה בִּבְשָׂרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר הִדְשִׁיא בַּאֲבִיבוֹ.

*

פְּרוּם חֻלְצָה, כְּשַׁעֲרֵי הֵיכָל פְּתוּחִים,
בְּאֶצְבְּעוֹת רַגְלַי אֲלַטְּפָה אַדְמַת בֹּקֶר.
הִנֵּה אֶתְפַּרְקֵד, אֶרְבְּצָה – חֵיק אֵם.
וְכָל הַנְּהָרוֹת יֵלְכוּ אֵלַי,
וְיַךְ שָׁרָשָׁיו בִּי כָּל אִילָן,
וּמִתְרַפֵּק עָלַי אֱלֹהֵי כָּל הָעוֹלָם וְלוֹחֵשׁ לִי בְּאַהֲבָה:
– אַתָּה!... אַתָּה!...
אֶשָּׂא גּוּפִי עַל כַּפַּיִם
וּמִתַּחַת לְרַעֲמַת אִילָן עָבֹת
עַל כֵּס דֶּשֶׁא יָרֹק אוֹשִׁיבֶנּוּ –
אָדָם־יְהוָֹה!
הִנֵּה עוֹטֵר הַשַּׁחַק חַמָּה גְּדוֹלָה לְמִצְחוֹ
בִּתְפִלִּין שֶׁל רֹאשׁ,
וְרוֹדֵף תְּפִלָּה אֱלֵי חֵיקִי. –
הִתְפָּרְמִי, חֻלְצָה כְּשַׁעֲרֵי הֵיכָל פְּתוּחִים,
וְתָבֹא תְּפִלַּת כָּל חַי
לִפְנֵי בְּשָׂרִי הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב. –

*

At night the tents light up, great lanterns,
And mountains of Gilboa draw their breath.
Who plots there the black schemes,
Like a great beast, maw gaping death?

Long-haired Balaam,* clear-eyed in vision —
The night upon a black ass rides the land:
Beneath it crouch the mountains of Gilboa,
They sense the rustling of God's sowing hand.

With hairy hand full of stars
God sows the seed of vision well,
And black lips tremulously whisper,
— "How goodly are your tents, O Jezrael!"

Toil

We have a small hand with five fingers,
Wax fingers thin to breaking.
The pulse beats at their beginning and at their end — fingernails.
Oh, what shall we do to the fingers on the day we labor with them?

*

בַּלַּיְלָה יוּאֲרוּ אֳהָלִים – פַּנָּסִים גְּדוֹלִים,
וְנוֹשְׁמִים הָרֵי הַגִּלְבֹּעַ. –
מִי זוֹמֵם שָׁם מְזִמָּה שְׁחוֹרָה,
כְּמוֹ חַיָּה גְדוֹלָה תִּפְעַר לֹעַ? –

בִּלְעָם אֶרֶךְ־שֵׂעָר, גְּלוּי־עֵינַיִם –
לַיִל רוֹכֵב עֲלֵי אָתוֹן שְׁחוֹרָה;
אַךְ רָבְצוּ תַּחְתָּיו הָרֵי בַגִּלְבֹּעַ –
חָשׁוּ: אַוְשַׁת יַד אֱלֹהַּ זוֹרְעָה.

בְּכַף שְׂעִירָה – מְלֹא חָפְנֶיהָ הַכּוֹכָבִים –
זֶרַע־חָזוֹן יִזְרַע אֵל.
שְׂפָתַיִם שְׁחוֹרוֹת לוֹחֲשׁוֹת בִּרְעָדָה:
– מַה טֹּבוּ אֹהָלֶיךָ, יִזְרְעֶאל!

עָמָל

כַּף יָד לָנוּ קְטַנָּה וְאֶצְבָּעוֹת חָמֵשׁ לָהּ,
אֶצְבְּעוֹת־שַׁעֲוָה דַּקּוֹת לְהִשָּׁבֵר,
בְּרֵאשִׁיתָן הוֹלֵם דֹּפֶק וּבִקְצֵיהֶן – צִפָּרְנַיִם.
הָהּ, מַה נַּעַשׂ לָאֶצְבָּעוֹת בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיְּעַבֵּד בָּן?

Pound mightily, human pulse! Grow wild, fingernails!
We are going to toil!

Oh, good for you, fingers, grasping a sickle on harvest day,
Embracing the clod covered with thorn!
You tell:
What shall we do to the tender fingers?

*

Oh, Sweat!
Oh, drops of blessing falling from my high forehead
Like dew from pure skies.

Here is my flesh, pure and hairy,
And the hair, black grass.
Oh sweat! Salty sweat!
Bedew my flesh like a bristling field at dawn.
    Hallelujah!

The dawn skies sway — the tangle of a great terebinth —
And the head of Absalom, golden curled,
Is caught in the tree top —
    Sun! Sun!

הֲלוֹם בְּאַדִּיר, דֹּפֶק־אָדָם! גַּדֵּלְנָה פֶּרֶא, צִפָּרְנַיִם!
אָנוּ הוֹלְכִים אֱלֵי עָמָל!

הָהּ, אַשְׁרֵיכֶן, הָאֶצְבָּעוֹת, אוֹחֲזוֹת מַגָּל בְּיוֹם קָצִיר,
חוֹבְקוֹת רֶגֶב כֻּסָּה חָרוּל!
אִמְרוּ אַתֶּן:
מַה יֵּעָשֶׂה לָאֶצְבָּעוֹת הָעֲנֻגּוֹת?

*

הָהּ, זֵעָה!
הָהּ, אֶגְלֵי בְּרָכָה הַיּוֹרְדִים מִמִּצְחִי הַגָּבֹהַּ –
כַּטַּל מִשָּׁמַיִם טְהוֹרִים.

הִנֵּה בְּשָׂרִי צַח וְשָׂעִיר,
וְהַשֵּׂעָר – דֶּשֶׁא שָׁחוֹר.
הָהּ, זֵעָה! זֵעָה מְלוּחָה!
הַטְלִילִי נָא אֶת בְּשָׂרִי, כִּשְׂדֵה שַׁחֲרִית סָמָר.
    הַלְלוּיָהּ!

יִתְנוֹפְפוּ שְׁמֵי־שַׁחֲרִית – שׂוֹבֶךְ אֵלָה גְּדוֹלָה –
וְרֹאשׁ אַבְשָׁלוֹם זְהוּב תַּלְתַּלִּים
נֶאֱחַז בְּצַמַּרְתָּם –
    חַמָּה! חַמָּה!

And I bend down to the sand:
From the weight of cement the dunes sigh:
— Oh, why have you come, man, to the desert
To put a bit into our mouth?

And suddenly the east wind whipped
And like flocks of camels, that knew no bit,
Stormed upon the city being built —
Sands!

On roads, foundations their stampede hailed
And with little hoofs
Hoofs of grains of sand
They kicked at my face:
Vengeance!
And suddenly they turned about and with whistlings:
Back to the deserts! Back to the deserts!

And I turned my hand
(In my hand a spade grey with concrete)
And the twisting roads began chasing them: After them!
They flung forth their lengthened hands:
Smash them! Smash them!

Harness the deserts!
Stretch the roads like reins!

וָאֶגְחַן אֶל הַחוֹל;
מֵעָקַת הַבֶּטוֹן פֹּה תֶּאֱנַחְנָה דְּיוּנוֹת;
– הָהּ, לָמָּה בָּאתָ, אָדָם, אֶל מִדְבָּרִיּוֹת
לְהַשְׁלִיךְ רֶסֶן אֱלֵי פִּינוּ?!

וּלְפֶתַע הִצְלִיף רוּחַ קָדִים
וּכְעֶדְרֵי גְּמַלִּים, אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אַפְסָר,
הִשְׂתָּעֲרוּ עַל הַקִּרְיָה הַנִּבְנֵית –
חוֹלוֹת!

עֲלֵי כְּבִישׁ וּמַסָּד שַׁעֲטָתָם תְּבָרֵד
וּבְפְרָסוֹת קְטַנּוֹת, –
פַּרְסוֹת גַּרְגְּרֵי הַחוֹל,
עַל פָּנַי יְטַלְפוּ:
נְקָמוֹת!
וְהִנֵּה – הָפְכוּ פְּנֵיהֶם – וּבִשְׁרִיקוֹת:
אֶל מִדְבָּרוֹת! אֶל מִדְבָּרוֹת!

וָאַט יָדִי
(וּבְיָדִי אֶת אֵפוּרָה מְנִי מֶלֶט) –
וַיִּדְלְקוּ כְּבִישִׁים מִתְפַּתְּלִים: אַחֲרֵיהֶם!
הֶאֱרִיכוּ כַּפַּיִם:
– הַכְפִּישֵׁם! הַכְפִּישֵׁם!

רִתְמוּ הַמִּדְבָּרוֹת!
וּכְמוֹשְׁכוֹת מַתְּחוּ כְּבִישִׁים!

I ride on the driver's seat!
I am — toil! —

Like huge fists lie on the sands
Houses — Houses — Houses —

And I feel:
It is I who am caught in the morning tree top
And in my hand like a sparkling ray, the spade.
Opposite me laughs the city newly made:
Sun! Sun!

*

Dress me, good mother, in a splendrous coat of many colors
And with dawn lead me to toil.
My land wraps in light like a prayer shawl,
Houses stand like phylacteries,
And like bands of phylacteries glide hand-laid asphalt roads.

Thus a beautiful city offers her morning prayer to her creator.
And among the creators, your son Abraham,
Poet-roadbuilder in Israel.

אֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב עַל הַדּוּכָן!
אֲנִי – הֶעָמָל! – – –

כְּאֶגְרוֹפִים גְּדוֹלִים רָבְצוּ עַל הַחוֹלוֹת:
בָּתִּים – בָּתִּים – בָּתִּים –

וַאֲנִי חָשׁ:
זֶה אֲנִי בְּצַמֶּרֶת הַשַּׁחַר נֶאֱחַזְתִּי
וּבְיָדִי כְּקֶרֶן נוֹצֶצֶת – הָאֵת.
וְצוֹחֲקָה אֶל מוּלִי הַקִּרְיָה הַנִּבְנֵית:
חַמָּה! חַמָּה!

*

הַלְבִּישִׁינִי, אִמָּא כְּשֵׁרָה, כְּתֹנֶת פַּסִּים לְתִפְאֶרֶת
וְעִם שַׁחֲרִית הוֹבִילִינִי אֱלֵי עָמָל.
עוֹטְפָה אַרְצִי אוֹר כַּטַּלִּית.
בָּתִּים נִצְּבוּ כַּטּוֹטָפוֹת.
וְכִרְצוּעוֹת תְּפִלִּין גּוֹלְשִׁים כְּבִישִׁים, סָלְלוּ כַּפַּיִם.

תְּפִלַּת־שַׁחֲרִית כֹּה תִּתְפַּלֵּל קִרְיָה נָאָה אֱלֵי בּוֹרְאָהּ.
וּבַבּוֹרְאִים – בְּנֵךְ אַבְרָהָם,
פַּיְּטָן סוֹלֵל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.

And toward evening, at dusk, father returns from his labors
And like prayer whispers with pleasure:
A dear son of mine is Abraham:
Skin, sinew, and bones.
    Hallelujah!

Dress me, good mother, in a splendrous coat of many colors
And at dawn lead me
    To toil.

Morning in My City

I have seen you, my erect morning, bare chested with tree-top tousled head,
Straight footed, standing in joy upon the flat roofs of the town.
Your head, as I always pictured it, sculptured in domed pride
Like the tilted head of a violinist playing a Bach chaconne.

And I recalled that Cabbalist* — compared to you by my father
    of blessed memory —
Who said to the scholars of the study house, removing his
    phylacteries as morning came:
"If I had but ten young men* who thirst for the wonder like me,
I would climb with them upon the roofs to sing out the Ineffable Name!"*

Now it is poured over roofs. Every thread of my body expresses it,
With each fiber in the dewy tree, meditating upon its symbols.*

וּבָעֶרֶב בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת יָשׁוּב אַבָּא מִסִּבְלוֹתָיו
וְכִתְפִלָּה יִלְחַשׁ נַחַת:
הַבֵּן יַקִּיר לִי אַבְרָהָם:
עוֹר וְגִידִים וַעֲצָמוֹת –
הַלְלוּיָה.

הַלְבִּישִׁינִי, אִמָּא כְּשֵׁרָה, כְּתֹנֶת פַּסִּים לְתִפְאֶרֶת
וְעִם שַׁחֲרִית הוֹבִילִינִי
אֱלֵי עָמָל.

בֹּקֶר בְּעִירִי

רְאִיתִיךָ, בָּקְרִי הַזָּקוּף, פְּרוּם־חָזֶה וּמְסֹעַף־הַצַּמֶּרֶת,
יְשַׁר־רֶגֶל מֻצָּב בְּרִנָּה עַל גַּגּוֹת רְדוּדִים שֶׁלַּכְּרָךְ,
וְרֹאשְׁךָ–כָּךְ תֵּאַרְתִּי תָּמִיד–: מְחֻטָּב תּוֹךְ גַּבְהוּת מְקֻמֶּרֶת,
כְּרֹאשׁוֹ הַמֻּפְשָׁל שֶׁל כַּנָּר, בְּנַגְּנוֹ אֶת שָׁקוֹנָה שֶׁל בַּאךְ.

וְזָכַרְתִּי אוֹתוֹ מְקֻבָּל, – שֶׁאָבִי זַ״ל אֵלֶיךָ דִּמָּהוּ, –
שֶׁחָלַץ אֶת תְּפִלָּיו עִם שַׁחְרִית וְאָמַר לְחוֹבְשֵׁי בֵּית־מִדְרָשׁ:
„מִי יִתְּנֵנִי מִנְיַן בַּחוּרִים, שֶׁכָּמוֹנִי לַפֶּלֶא יִכְמָהוּ, –
וְטִפַּסְתִּי עִמָּם עַל גַּגּוֹת לְרַנֵּן אֶת הַשֵּׁם הַמְּפֹרָשׁ״.

וְעַכְשָׁו הוּא שָׁפוּךְ עַל גַּגּוֹת, כָּל רִקְמָה בְּגוּפִי תְּבַטְּאֶנּוּ,
עִם כָּל סִיב בְּאִילָן מְטֻלָּל יֶהְגֶּנּוּ בְּאוֹתִיּוֹתָיו.

Windows open in the city. Cluster upon cluster, as from a basket,
People trickle into the streets with their plucked winey smiles.

Like a cat indulging in the sun, spreading its claws at the air,
A bachelor sea stretches before you, amazing infants with its size:
As if deciding whether time had come to bristle its smooth fur…
But your hand, large and hairy, caresses, soothes "not yet!"

Your air still straightens up, stands on tiptoe straining to hear,
High heavens in priestly blessing spread their hands —
On such an intoxicating morning, how caressing to its sensing ear
This alert human stirring, this murmuring speech of man.

Soon the knobby sycamore on the construction lot strewn with nails,
Will quake hearing the sound of footsteps and the creak of scaffolds
moving along —
Then will I see you, my upright morning, bare chested with tree-top
tousled head;
Climbing the roofs with ten young men singing the builder's song.

חַלּוֹנוֹת נִפְתָּחִים בְּעִירִי: אֶשְׁכֹּלוֹת־אֶשְׁכֹּלוֹת, כְּמִטֶּנֶא,
יְזַלְּפוּ בְּנֵי־אָדָם אֶל הָרְחוֹב חִיּוּכָם הַיֵּינִי הַנִּקְטָף.

כְּחָתוּל מִתְפַּנֵּק בַּחַמָּה וּמְפַשֵּׂק צִפָּרְנָיו אֶל הָרוּחַ,
יִתְמוֹדֵד מִמּוּלְךָ יָם רַוָּק, הַמַּפְלִיא תִּינוֹקוֹת בְּגָדְלוֹ,
כְּנִמְלָךְ, אִם הִגִּיעָה עִתּוֹ לְסַמֵּר אֶת צַמְרוֹ הַשָּׁטוּחַ...
אַךְ כַּפְּךָ, הַשְּׂעִירָה וּגְדוֹלָה, תְּלַטְּפוֹ לְהַרְגִּיעַ: עוֹד לֹא!

אֲוִירְךָ עוֹד עוֹקֵף קוֹמָתוֹ וְעוֹמֵד עַל בְּהוֹנוֹת מֵרֹב קֶשֶׁב,
וְשָׁמַיִם גְּבוֹהִים יִפְרְשׂוּ בְּבִרְכַּת־כֹּהֲנִים אֶת יָדָם; –
בְּשַׁחֲרִית מְבֻשֶּׂמֶת כָּזֹאת מַה־לּוֹטְפָה אֶת אָזְנָם הַנִּרְגֶּשֶׁת
זוֹ אִוְשָׁה אֱנוֹשִׁית נֵעוֹרָה – הַמּוּלַּת דִּבּוּרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם.

עוֹד מְעַט וְשִׁקְמָה יַבְלוּלִית בְּכִכַּר הַבִּנְיָן הַמְּסֻמֶּרֶת
תִּתְחַלְחֵל לְמִשְׁמַע קוֹל פְּסִיעוֹת וַחֲרוּק פִּגּוּמִים מוּנָעִים –
אָז אֶרְאֶךָ, בָּקְרִי הַזָּקוּף, פְּרוּם־חָזֶה וּמְסֹעַף־הַצַּמֶּרֶת,
מְטַפֵּס עִם מִנְיַן בַּחוּרִים עַל גַּגּוֹת בְּרִנּוּן בַּנָּאִי.

At Evening when Flicker

At evening when flicker
Sparks on the mountain,
One goes from within me
To the landscapes of no-return.

His mantle is cloud,
His amazement like the sea.
I bend after his spirit
With grass and stillness.

I cry out without sound,
He hints without motion.
His echo distance — footsteps
Expire in me forever...

In the World's Heart Burns a Torch of Fire

In the world's heart burns a torch of fire,
In its footsteps, eternal wanderers we have gone.
Embodied light of all that transpires
It is the fire-core for everyone.

עֶרֶב בְּהִתְלַקַּח...

עֶרֶב, בְּהִתְלַקַּח
נִיצוֹצוֹת בָּהָר,
הוֹלֵךְ אֶחָד מִתּוֹכִי
אֶל נוֹפֵי אַל־שׁוּב.

אַדַּרְתּוֹ עֲנָנָה,
תִּמְהוֹנוֹ כַּיָּם.
אֲנִי שַׁח אַחֲרֵי רוּחוֹ
עִם דֶּשֶׁא וּדְמִי.

אֲנִי זוֹעֵק בְּאֵין הֶגֶה,
וְהוּא רוֹמֵז בְּאֵין נִיד.
וְהֵד פַּעֲמֵי מֶרְחַקָּיו
גֹּוֵעַ בִּי עַד...

בְּלֵב הָעוֹלָם

בְּלֵב הָעוֹלָם בּוֹעֵר לַפִּיד אֵשׁ,
וּבְעִקְּבוֹתָיו תּוֹעֵי־עַד יָצָאנוּ.
הוּא הָאוֹר הַגָּלוּם בְּכָל יֵשׁ,
הוּא הַמּוֹקֵד לְכֻלָּנוּ.

Walk the path, my heart, my heart, walk the course,
Upon it man is the god, dance is the compelling force.
There where you rest, there where you wander too —
With you the mystery rests, the spirit rests with you.

Break into song, my heart, my heart, break into song,
To the infinite light,* to splendor without end.
Lift up the cup and drink to joy and to distress,
Exult toward life, exult toward death!

All Is Not So Simple

All is not so simple in the yards of the houses
From every storey the windows stare.
In pallid pavement, on walls that fade
Each hour that passes, each hour is engraved.

All is not so simple between the walls of the rooms.
There is something in the stance of the bookcase.
The heavy curtain, the made bed
Kneel under a yoke a burden of knowledge.

In every house there are dark stairs.
In the morning come down, at night go up
Creatures who are silent, who close their doors —
For them my soul grieves, for them it implores.

אֹרַח לֵךְ, לִבִּי, לִבִּי, לֵךְ הָאֹרַח,
בּוֹ אָדָם הָאֵל, בּוֹ מָחוֹל הַכֹּרַח.
בַּאֲשֶׁר תָּנוּד, בַּאֲשֶׁר תָּנוּחַ –
נָח עִמְּךְ הַסּוֹד, נָח עִמְּךְ הָרוּחַ.

זֶמֶר פְּצַח, לִבִּי, לִבִּי, פְּצַח הַזֶּמֶר,
לָאוֹר שֶׁאֵין לוֹ סוֹף, לַיְקָר שֶׁאֵין לוֹ גֶּמֶר.
שָׂא הַכּוֹס וּשְׁתֵה לַגִּיל וְלָעַצָּבֶת,
צְהַל לִקְרַאת חַיִּים וּצְהַל לִקְרַאת הַמָּוֶת!

לֹא הַכֹּל כֹּה פָּשׁוּט

לֹא הַכֹּל כֹּה פָּשׁוּט בְּחַצְרוֹת הַבָּתִּים,
מִכָּל הַקּוֹמוֹת חַלּוֹנוֹת נִבָּטִים,
וּבְדְהִי הַחוֹמוֹת, בְּעֵירֹם הַמִּרְצֶפֶת
תְּחָרֵת כָּל שָׁעָה, כָּל שָׁעָה הַחוֹלֶפֶת...

לֹא הַכֹּל כֹּה פָּשׁוּט בֵּין כָּתְלֵי חֲדָרִים,
יֵשׁ דָּבָר בְּמַעֲמָד שֶׁל אֲרוֹן הַסְּפָרִים,
וְהַמָּסָךְ הַכָּבֵד וְהַמִּטָּה הַמֻּצַּעַת
כּוֹרְעִים תַּחַת עֹל. תַּחַת נֵטֶל שֶׁל דַּעַת...

וּבְכָל הַבָּתִּים מַדְרֵגוֹת אֲפֵלוֹת,
שָׁם יוֹרְדִים בַּבְּקָרִים וְעוֹלִים בַּלֵּילוֹת
יְצוּרִים שֶׁשּׁוֹתְקִים וְסוֹגְרִים אֶת הַדֶּלֶת –
נַפְשִׁי עֲלֵיהֶם, נַפְשִׁי מִתְפַּלֶּלֶת...

We lust, building ivory spires,
We kneel silent to the secret within us alone.
And in the world's heart burns a torch of fire —
It is the fire-core for everyone...

Suddenly We Will Wake

Suddenly we will wake from sleep at night,
Between fright and fright.
The walls are contorted, the window panes dark
And in us the light.

And for the eternals of joy our blood will listen —
And here is their voice!
And with both hands upon the tablet of the heart*
We embrace the world!

Drink Wonder

Drink wonder, my heart, drink in the wonder,
Day moves to day, night after night does not wander.
Strip off your garment, plunge into feeling and sensation,
Each shape is vision, each touch is revelation.

אָנוּ עוֹגְבִים, בּוֹנִים טִירוֹת שֵׁשׁ.
אָנוּ כּוֹרְעִים דֹּם לַסּוֹד שֶׁבָּנוּ.
וּבְלֵב הָעוֹלָם בּוֹעֵר לַפִּיד אֵשׁ –
הוּא הַמּוֹקֵד לְכֻלָּנוּ...

פִּתְאֹם נָקִיץ

פִּתְאֹם נָקִיץ מִשְּׁנָתֵנוּ בַּלֵּילוֹת,
בֵּין מוֹרָא לְמוֹרָא.
נִלְפָּתִים הַכְּתָלִים, הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת אֲפֵלוֹת
וּבָנוּ – הָאוֹרָה.

וּלְנִצְחֵי רְנָנָה יַאֲזִינוּ דָּמֵינוּ –
וְהִנֵּה הוּא קוֹלָם!
וּבְכַפֵּינוּ הַשְּׁתַּיִם עַל לוּחַ לִבֵּנוּ –
נְחַבֵּק הָעוֹלָם!

פֶּלֶא גְּמַע...

פֶּלֶא גְּמַע, לִבִּי, לִבִּי, גְּמַע הַפֶּלֶא,
יוֹם אֶל יוֹם יִשָּׂא, לֵיל עַל לֵיל לֹא יֵלֶא.
פְּשֹׁט הַלְּבוּשׁ וּצְלֹל בָּרַחַשׁ וּבָרֶטֶט,
כָּל מַגָּע – גִּלּוּי, כָּל דְּמוּת חָזוֹן שׁוֹתֶתֶת.

The Stoker

The ship sets sail, the ship is journeying
Among secret stars, among islands of basalt,
The wake is scattered, the wake is drowning
In fragments of foam, in twilight black.

The silence deepens, the silence is hoisted
Over deck and rope, over hatch and porthole:
Only from below my ear hears the echo,
From the maze of rungs life's cabin I recall.

There always stands one, his body alabaster;
He stares with glassy eyes, smoke-swarmed,
This same one always feeds the fire
Black coals with his granite arms.

Slumber is chewing, slumber is swallowing
The stars, the earth, the ship and the deep.
This flame alone never sets
And this one alone, only he does not sleep.

הַמַּסִּיק

הַסְּפִינָה מַפְלֶגֶת, הַסְּפִינָה נוֹסַעַת
בֵּין אִיֵּי בַּזֶּלֶת, בֵּין כּוֹכְבֵי מִסְתּוֹר.
הַנְּתִיבָה נִבְזֶקֶת, הַנְּתִיבָה טוֹבַעַת
בִּמְכִתּוֹת שֶׁל קֶצֶף, בְּדִמְדּוּם שָׁחוֹר.

הַדְּמָמָה תּוֹהֶמֶת, הַדְּמָמָה מוּקַעַת
עַל סִפּוּן וָחֶבֶל, בְּאֶשְׁנָב וּסְגוֹר.
רַק מִתַּחְתִּיּוֹת אָזְנִי הַדְּהוּד שׁוֹמַעַת,
רַק בִּמְבוֹךְ שְׁלַבִּים תָּא חַיִּים אֶזְכּוֹר.

שָׁם נִצָּב תָּמִיד אֶחָד עִם גּוּף שֶׁל בַּהַט,
חַם, אֲפוּף עָשָׁן, לוֹטֵשׁ עֵינֵי זְכוּכִית.
שָׁם מֵטִיל תָּמִיד אֶחָד אֶל תּוֹךְ הַלַּהַט
פֶּחָמִים שְׁחוֹרִים בִּזְרוֹעוֹת גְּרָנִיט.

תַּרְדֵּמָה כּוֹסֶסֶת, תַּרְדֵּמָה בּוֹלַעַת
כּוֹכָבִים וָאֶרֶץ, אֳנִיָּה וָיָם.
הַלַּבָּה הַזֹּאת רַק הִיא אֵינָהּ שׁוֹקַעַת,
הָאֶחָד הַזֶּה רַק הִיא אֵינוֹ נִרְדָּם.

They That Sow at Night

Go slowly, go slowly, oh moon, upon your way. We are sowing by your light,
Sowing the fields of Galilee.
Enemies rise against us from all sides, the roaring human desires
close upon us —
And we go out to sow at night,
For we want only to sow and our soul longs for grain.

Go slowly, go slowly, oh moon, upon your way.
Divided and cleft are the fields of Galilee, precious and holy
is the seed we scatter...
We need your light, we need your light.
Let us see our way and let them not see us.
Let our seed sprout, let not the cruel uproot it.
Make our night-sown grain grow, for the sun has surely betrayed us,
And the days are given to annihilation.

Go slowly, go slowly, oh moon, on your way, do not be alarmed
by our moving shadows,
We are Hebrew men sowing their fields at night.
We have no voice and no sound.
There is no sound in our horses' hoofs and our wagon wheels are muffled.
Secretly, secretly we walk, the surrounding mountains do not understand us.
You, understand our deed. Let them not plunder us.
Guard us from the wandering bullet, from the knife out of the ambush.
Guard us from war's battle cry, from blood spilled on the furrows.

הַזּוֹרְעִים בַּלֵּילוֹת

לְאַט לְךָ, לְאַט לְךָ, הַסַּהַר, בְּדַרְכְּךָ, אֲנַחְנוּ זוֹרְעִים לְאוֹרְךָ,
זוֹרְעִים אֶת שַׁדְמוֹת הַגָּלִיל.
קָמוּ עָלֵינוּ אוֹיְבִים מִכָּל צַד, סָגְרוּ עָלֵינוּ מַאֲוַיֵּי־הָאָדָם הַשּׁוֹאֲגִים –
וַנֵּצֵא לִזְרֹעַ בַּלַּיְלָה,
כִּי רַק לִזְרֹעַ אָנוּ חֲפֵצִים וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ שׁוֹקֶקֶת לְבָר.

לְאַט לְךָ, לְאַט לְךָ, הַסַּהַר בְּדַרְכְּךָ.
מְחֻצָּצִים וּמְבֻקָּעִים הַשָּׂדוֹת בַּגָּלִיל, יָקָר וְקָדוֹשׁ לָנוּ הַזֶּרַע נְפַזֵּר –
וַאֲנַחְנוּ זְקוּקִים לְאוֹרְךָ, לְאוֹרְךָ אָנוּ זְקוּקִים.
תֶּן־נָא וְרָאִינוּ אֶת דַּרְכֵּנוּ וְרָאֹה אַל יִרְאוּנוּ הֵם.
תֶּן־נָא וְנָבַט הַזֶּרַע וְאַל יְעַקְּרוּהוּ זֵדִים.
הַצְמַח תְּבוּאָתֵנוּ זָרַעְנוּ בַּלַּיְלָה, כִּי בָּגוֹד בָּגְדָה בָּנוּ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ,
וְהַיָּמִים נְתוּנִים לְכִלָּיוֹן.

לְאַט לְךָ, לְאַט לְךָ, הַסַּהַר, בְּדַרְכְּךָ, וְאַל נָא תִּבָּהֵל מִצְּלָלֵינוּ
הַנָּעִים.
אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים אֲנַחְנוּ, הַזּוֹרְעִים שְׂדוֹתֵיהֶם בַּלֵּילוֹת.
לֹא קוֹל לָנוּ וְלֹא הֶגֶה.
לֹא מַמָּשׁ לְפַרְסוֹת סוּסֵינוּ וְגַלְגַּלֵּי עֶגְלוֹתֵינוּ רְפוּדִים.
חֲשָׁאִים, חֲשָׁאִים נִתְהַלֵּךְ וְהֶהָרִים מִסָּבִיב לֹא יְבִינוּנוּ.
הָבֶן־נָא אַתָּה לְפָעֳלֵנוּ וְאַל תִּתְּנֵנוּ לִמְשִׁסָּה.
שָׁמְרֵנוּ מִכַּדּוּר מִתְעַתֵּעַ, מִסַּכִּין הַבָּאָה מִן הַמַּאֲרָב.
שָׁמְרֵנוּ מִתְּרוּעַת מִלְחָמָה, מִדָּם הַנִּשְׁפָּךְ עַל הַתְּלָמִים.

Guard the seed we have sown, guard it from theft and from scorching wind,
May our children eat and be satisfied. May they rise lofty and
remember us for good.
Only for them do we sow at night, for their sake our steps are alarmed.
For we are Hebrew men, sowing our fields at night.
Go slowly, go slowly, oh moon, upon your way.

Guard Me, Oh God

Guard me, Oh God, from hating man my brother,
Guard me from recalling what, from my early youth, to me he did.
When all the stars in my sky are quenched, within me my soul's
voice grows mute —
When I am overcome by disaster, let me not lay bare his guilt.

For he is my hidden dwelling-place, in him am I reflected again,
Like a wayfarer from the planets, beholding his face in a pool.
What use is all my struggle, to whom shall I wail out the pain —
If hollow, blemished is my distant night's moon?

When the gates are locked, darkness over the city reclining,
And emptied of love, rejected, I am bound to my rock:
Permit me to see in him a spark, only a spark still shining,
That I may know that in myself, in me, all is not yet snuffed out.

שְׁמֹר עַל הַזֶּרַע זָרַעְנוּ, שָׁמְרֵהוּ מִשֹּׁד וּמִשִּׁדָּפוֹן,
יֹאכְלוּ בָּנֵינוּ וְיִשְׂבָּעוּ, יָרוּמוּ וְיִזְכְּרוּנוּ לְטוֹבָה.
כִּי רַק לְמַעֲנָם אָנוּ זוֹרְעִים בַּלֵּילוֹת וּלְמַעֲנָם צְעָדֵינוּ בְּהוּלִים,
כִּי אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים אֲנַחְנוּ, הַזּוֹרְעִים שְׂדוֹתֵיהֶם בַּלֵּילוֹת.
לְאַט לְךָ, לְאַט לְךָ, הַסַּהַר, בְּדַרְכְּךָ.

שָׁמְרֵנִי, אֱלֹהִים...

שָׁמְרֵנִי, אֱלֹהִים, מִשִּׂנְאַת אָחִי הָאָדָם,
שָׁמְרֵנִי מִזְּכֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר מֵאִבִּי לִי עוֹלֵל.
בִּדְעֹךְ כָּל כּוֹכְבֵי רְקִיעִי וְקוֹל הַנְּשָׁמָה בִּי נָדַם –
אַל־נָא תְּבוֹאֵנִי שׁוֹאָה עָלָיו אַשְׁמָתוֹ לְגוֹלֵל.

כִּי הוּא מְחוֹזִי הֶעָלוּם וּבוֹ אָנֹכִי מִשְׁתַּקֵּף
כְּהֵלֶךְ הַבָּא מִמַּזָּרִים וְצוֹפֶה אֶת פָּנָיו בָּאֲגַם.
שֶׁלָּמָּה הָיוּ נַפְתּוּלַי, וּלְמִי אֲתַנֶּה אֶת הַכְּאֵב –
אִם סַהַר לֵילִי הָרָחוֹק חָלוּל מִתּוֹכוֹ וְנִפְגָּם?

וְעֵת הַשְּׁעָרִים נְעוּלִים וְחֹשֶׁךְ רוֹבֵץ עַל הָעִיר.
וַאֲנִי מְרֻתָּק אֶל סַלְעִי, מְנֻדֶּה וּמְנֹעַר אַהֲבָה –
תְּנֵנִי לִרְאוֹת בּוֹ נִיצוֹץ, רַק נִיצוֹץ שֶׁעוֹדֶנּוּ מֵאִיר,
לְמַעַן אֵדַע כִּי גַּם בִּי, כִּי גַּם בִּי עוֹד הַכֹּל לֹא כָבָה...

Memento of Roads

Send forth your songs like the doe and the fawn
Listen —
Yet far, far away roar
Many roads
That dug in the tunnels of the horizon,
The blue, the red,
And crossed in the stormy summer
Gliding with villages to the well,
And journeyed with rows of swaying trains
To cities and fairs.

Field roads, hill and valley roads,
Waves of their long breath…
Fields at moonlight in plaster masks,
Pastures, sun, and whistling.
Roads
In their expanse
White and singing.
With a rope desire dragged me!

The sound of wheel and wind and brief meetings,
A trotting horse's neigh between bell and whip,
Night flickering every jewel,

מַזְכֶּרֶת לַדְּרָכִים

שַׁלְּחוּ אֶת שִׁירֵיכֶם כְּאַיָּלָה וָעֹפֶר
הַקְשִׁיבוּ –
עוֹד הַרְחֵק הַרְחֵק מְנַהֲמוֹת
הַרְבֵּה דְּרָכִים.
אֲשֶׁר חָתְרוּ בְּמִנְהֲרוֹת הָאֹפֶק.
הַכְּחֻלּוֹת וְגַם הָאֲדֻמּוֹת,
וְחָצוּ בַּקַּיִץ הַסּוֹעֵר
וְגָלְשׁוּ עִם הַכְּפָרִים לַבְּאֵר
וְנָסְעוּ, בְּטוּר קְרוֹנוֹת מִתְנוֹדְדִים,
אֶל הֶעָרִים וְהַיְּרִידִים.

דַּרְכֵי שָׂדֶה, דַּרְכֵי בְּקָעוֹת וָגֶבַע,
גַּלֵּי נְשִׁימָתָן הָאֲרֻכָּה...
שָׂדוֹת לְאוֹר יָרֵחַ בְּמַסְווֹת הַגֶּבֶס,
כָּרֵי מִרְעֶה וָשֶׁמֶשׁ וּשְׁרִיקָה.
דְּרָכִים,
אֶל מֶרְחָבָן
הַשָּׁר וְהַלָּבָן
בְּחֶבֶל הוֹבִילַתְנִי הַתְּשׁוּקָה!

לְקוֹל גַּלְגַּל וָרוּחַ וְטִיסַת פְּגִישׁוֹת
וְנַחַר סוּס דּוֹהֵר בֵּין פַּעֲמוֹן וָשׁוֹט
וְלַיְלָה מְהַבְהֵב בְּכָל הָעֲדָיִים

And a wood huddled like a giant child
To an inn opened to greet the guests.
With pailfuls of laughter the innkeeper's daughter
Emerges beautiful in the red shawl
And the blue ice of her eyes.
Happy is he who gulped her cold milk
Somewhere along the fifty-second league.

Roads, Roads —
Rows of nights passed over them, like friars
Gone forth in throngs, lofty and fragile
As their souls of water and air expired.

Roads, with my own eyes I drew you to me,
Roads, with my own life I loved you.
Your fingernails scratch, scratch a fiery scar
On the horizon that calls and erupts.

Red Ridinghood

When our wild day is wiped like a tear
From cities and forest, from month and year,
Red Ridinghood walks on the road,
To pick a wild flower in the wood.

וְחֹרֶשׁ מְכֻוָּץ כְּיֶלֶד עֲנָקִי
וְעַד פֻּנְדָּק נִפְתָּח לִפְגֹּשׁ אֶת הַבָּאִים,
בִּמְלֹא דַּלְיֵי צְחוֹקָהּ שֶׁל בַּת הַפֻּנְדְּקִי,
אֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא יָפָה, בְּאֹדֶם הַסּוּדָר,
בְּקֶרַח הַתְּכַלְכַל שֶׁלְּעֵינַיִם – –
אַשְׁרֵי אֲשֶׁר גָּמַע מֵחֲלָבָהּ הַקָּר,
אֵי־שָׁמָּה, בַּפַּרְסָה הַחֲמִשִּׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם.

דְּרָכִים, דְּרָכִים – –
טוּרֵי לֵילוֹת עָבְרוּ בָּן כִּנְזִירִים אַחִים,
אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ בְּסָךְ גָּבֹהַּ וְשָׁבִיר,
בִּפְרֹחַ נִשְׁמָתָם שֶׁל מַיִם וַאֲוִיר.

אֲנִי אֶתְכֶן, דְּרָכִים, בְּמוֹ עֵינַי שְׁאַבְתִּי.
אֲנִי אֶתְכֶן, דְּרָכִים, בְּמוֹ חַיַּי אָהַבְתִּי.
צִפָּרְנֵיכֶן שׂוֹרְטוֹת, שׂוֹרְטוֹת צַלֶּקֶת אֵשׁ
בָּאֹפֶק הַקּוֹרֵא וְהַגּוֹעֵשׁ.

כִּפָּה אֲדֻמָּה

עֵת יוֹמֵנוּ הַפֶּרֶא נִמְחָה כְּדִמְעָה
מֵעָרִים וִיעָרוֹת, מִשָּׁנָה וָחֹדֶשׁ,
הוֹלֶכֶת בַּדֶּרֶךְ כִּפָּה אֲדֻמָּה,
לְלַקֵּט פֶּרַח־בָּר בַּחֹרֶשׁ.

And following her is a duck and a cow,
Hobbling on a cane is a cat —
Like a tale that was lost, like a song long ago,
Like a smile that is old and forgot.

In the distance stand the coming years,
In vain our bewilderments increase,
A naked moon sucks on its thumb
As in father's lap, at the first.

And we are silent. A grassy earth
Flutters in lashes of green…
We closed our eyes — And suddenly look
The tree's crown is already dark.

Beyond Melody

With a violin in the alley grandfather and son disappeared.
Again the night was closed. Oh, speak, please speak!
I who grew up with all your stones,
I knew — like confession, they too would break.

Stones like tears in the lashes of the world.
How shall I set out to wipe them with a silken cloth?

וְיוֹצְאִים אַחֲרֶיהָ פָּרָה וַאֲוָז
וְחָתוּל מְדַדֶּה עַל מִשְׁעֶנֶת — —
כְּסִפּוּר שֶׁאָבַד, כְּנִגּוּן מִנִּי אָז,
כְּבַת־צְחוֹק נִשְׁכָּחָה וְנוֹשֶׁנֶת.

וְעוֹמְדוֹת מֵרָחוֹק הַשָּׁנִים הַבָּאוֹת
וְלַשָּׁוְא תְּמִיהוֹתֵינוּ כֹּה רַבּוּ
וּמוֹצֵץ לוֹ יָרֵחַ עֵירוֹם אֶצְבָּעוֹ
כְּבִימֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית, בְּחֵיק אַבָּא.

וַאֲנַחְנוּ שׁוֹתְקִים. אֲדָמָה עֲשָׂבִית
בִּירַקְרַק הָרִיסִים מְפַרְפֶּרֶת...
וְעֵינֵינוּ עָצַמְנוּ — — וּלְפֶתַע נַבִּיט
וְהִנֵּה כְּבָר חָשְׁכָה הַצַּמֶּרֶת.

מֵעֵבֶר לַמַּנְגִּינָה

בַּסִּמְטָה, עִם כִּנּוֹר, נֶעֶלְמוּ סָב וָנֶכֶד.
שׁוּב הַלַּיְלָה נִסְגַּר. הָהּ, דַּבֵּר, דַּבֶּר־נָא!
אֲנִי שֶׁגָּדַלְתִּי עִם כָּל אֲבָנַיִךְ,
יָדַעְתִּי – גַּם הֵן כְּוִדּוּי תִּשָּׁבַרְנָה.

אֲבָנִים כִּדְמָעוֹת בְּרִיסֵי הָעוֹלָם.
אֵיךְ אֵצֵא לְמָחוֹתָן בְּמִטְפַּחַת מֶשִׁי?

Over the last song that opposite them trembles,
Silence circles like an eagle.

At times from the night we open amazed eyes,
With wisdom and folly slow, slow we shall smile.
Mother's greyness looks at our lives,
The silence of rooms where there is no child.

And we shall go out to pale roads we abandoned,
They stand erect with a cloud and a song,
They shall go rocking us in their bosom —
They shall go tall, go tender and strong.

Go and tell them
The well is filled,
The forest burns in its sovereign mantle.
But deaf and alone
Our field is tilled
By our petty, abashed pain.

It has no deliverer, it has no flags.
Dressed in mourning silence guards its cradles.
Like its big brothers it lives alone,
Like the end, the autumn, the heart.

עַל אַחֲרוֹן הַשִּׁירִים הָרוֹעֵד לְמוּלָן
חָגָה הַדְּמָמָה כְּנֶשֶׁר.

יֵשׁ נִפְקַח מִן הַלַּיְלָה עֵינַיִם תְּמֵהוֹת,
נְחַיֵּךְ אַט־לְאַט מִתְּבוּנוֹת וְאִוֶּלֶת.
אֶל חַיֵּינוּ נִשְׁקֶפֶת שֵׂיבַת אִמָּהוֹת,
דּוּמִיַּת חֲדָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין בָּהֶם יֶלֶד.

יֵשׁ נֵצֵא לַדְּרָכִים הַחִוְּרוֹת שֶׁזָּנַחְנוּ,
שֶׁתִּזְדַּקֵּפְנָה קוֹמָה בְּנִגּוּן וְעָנָן,
וְתֵלַכְנָה גְּבֹהוֹת, רַכּוֹת־כֹּחַ תֵּלַכְנָה,
הָלוֹךְ וְהָנֵעַ אוֹתָנוּ בְּחֵיקָן – –

הָלוֹךְ וְדַבֵּר
שֶׁמָּלְאָה הַבְּאֵר,
שֶׁהַיַּעַר בּוֹעֵר בְּאַדְּרוֹת הַמַּלְכוּת,
אַךְ בּוֹדֵד וְחֵרֵשׁ
אֶת שָׂדֵהוּ חוֹרֵשׁ
כְּאֵבֵנוּ הַנִּכְלָם וְהַפָּעוּט.

כִּי אֵין לוֹ מָשִׁיחַ וְאֵין לוֹ דְּגָלִים
וּדְמָמוֹת בִּלְבוּשׁ אֵבֶל שׁוֹמְרוֹת עֲרָשׂוֹתָיו.
הוּא שׁוֹכֵן לְבָדָד כְּאֶחָיו הַגְּדוֹלִים,
הַסּוֹף וְהַלֵּב וְהַסְּתָו.

It shines like light in mother's forgiveness,
In wisdom's and folly's bashful quiet —
On the lips of thresholds thirsty and wide
Its smile is stoned at our feet.

Moon

Also an old image has a moment's birth
Sky without bird
Strange and fortified
On the moonlight night opposite your window
Stands a city dipped in crickets' cry.

And as you see the road still looking to the wayfarer
And the moon
On the cypress's spear,
You say: my God, are all these still here?
May one still whisper to ask how they are?

From their pools the water looks at us.
Tranquil is the tree
In its ruby earrings,
O our God, never shall be torn from me
The sorrow of your great playthings.

הוּא זוֹרֵחַ כָּאוֹר בִּסְלִיחַת אִמָּהוֹת,
בִּשְׁתִיקָה בַּיְשָׁנִית שֶׁל תְּבוּנוֹת וְאִוֶּלֶת –
עַל שִׂפְתֵי מִפְתָּנִים רְחָבוֹת וּצְמֵאוֹת
בַּת־צְחוֹקוֹ בְּרַגְלֵינוּ נִסְקֶלֶת.

יָרֵחַ

גַּם לְמַרְאֶה נוֹשָׁן יֵשׁ רֶגַע שֶׁל הֻלֶּדֶת.
שָׁמַיִם בְּלִי צִפּוֹר
זָרִים וּמְבֻצָּרִים.
בַּלַּיְלָה הַסָּהוּר מוּל חַלּוֹנְךָ עוֹמֶדֶת
עִיר טְבוּלָה בִּבְכִי הַצְּרָצָרִים.

וּבִרְאוֹתְךָ כִּי דֶּרֶךְ עוֹד צוֹפָה אֶל הֵלֶךְ
וְהַיָּרֵחַ
עַל כִּידוֹן הַבְּרוֹשׁ
אַתָּה אוֹמֵר – אֵלִי, הַעוֹד יֶשְׁנָם כָּל אֵלֶּה?
הַעוֹד מֻתָּר בְּלַחַשׁ בִּשְׁלוֹמָם לִדְרֹשׁ?

מֵאַגְמֵיהֶם הַמַּיִם נִבָּטִים אֵלֵינוּ.
שׁוֹקֵט הָעֵץ
בְּאֹדֶם עֲגִילִים.
לָעַד לֹא תֵעָקֵר מִמֶּנִּי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
תּוּגַת צַעֲצוּעֶיךָ הַגְּדוֹלִים.

The Joy of the Poor *(excerpts)*

Introduction

The joy of the poor knocked on the door,
Till then the man waited for her.
She lifted her violin, joy of the poor,
The deathly poor rejoiced in her.

And he said: How pleasant, how good,
The Joy of the Poor I have heard.

At night, at night — scolded and robbed
On a straw pallet he had dreamed of her:
As vengeance is dreamed, as the body pains,
And the poor man's lamb is pure.

And he said: How pleasant, how good,
You have come to me, Joy of the Poor.

But the joy said: No, your destroyer has come.
No, your last day has come to you.
I do not tread your olive-press or visit your home,
With the bearers-of-the-ark* I go.

And he said: to my tormentor, my foe
How will you return, Joy of the Poor?

And she said: I go down with you to the pit,
Ark-man you press me like a man still alive.

שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים (מספר השירים)

הַקְדָּמָה

דָּפְקָה עַל הַדֶּלֶת שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים.
כִּי חִכָּה לָהּ הָאִישׁ עַד עֵת.
וַתִּשָּׂא כִּנּוֹרֶיהָ שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים,
וַיִּשְׂמַח בָּהּ עֲנִי־כְּמֵת.

וַיֹּאמַר: מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים,
כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים.

וּבַלַּיְלָה, בַּלַּיְלָה, שָׁדוּד וְנָזוּף,
חֲלָמָהּ עַל מַצַּע הַקַּשׁ:
חֲלוּמָה כְּנָקָם וְכוֹאֶבֶת כַּגּוּף
וְצַחָה כְּכִבְשַׂת הָרָשׁ.

וַיֹּאמַר: מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים,
כִּי בָּאתְנִי שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים.

וַתֹּאמַר הַשִּׂמְחָה: לֹא, כִּי בָּא מַשְׁחִיתְךָ.
לֹא, כִּי בָּא לְךָ יוֹם אַחֲרוֹן.
לֹא פָּקַדְתִּי בֵּיתְךָ, לֹא דָּרַכְתִּי גִּתְּךָ,
רַק אֵלֵךְ עִם נוֹשְׂאֵי־הָאָרוֹן.

וַיֹּאמַר: אֶל צָרַי וּמְעַנַּי,
אֵיךְ תָּשׁוּבִי, שִׂמְחַת הֶעָנִי?

וַתֹּאמַר: בּוֹר אֵרֵד אִתְּךָ, אִישׁ־הָאָרוֹן,
כִּי נוֹשֶׂה אַתָּה בִּי כְּמוֹ חַי.

You did not see my face until the end,
The foe too shall not see me and live.

And he said: How pleasant, how good,
That you are with me, Joy of the Poor.

1. The Song to the Wife of His Youth

My daughter, all is not vanity.
All is not vain.
My promise to silver I broke,
My days I scattered in vain.
Only you I followed, my daughter,
As the neck follows the rope.

My daughter, you wound your kerchief.
You said to me: look and see.
I vowed not to bite my crust of bread
Till your greenness blunted my teeth.
My daughter, I vowed to look at you
Till my eyes grew too dim to see.

My daughter, then sickness struck.
Poverty covered our face.

כִּי פָּנַי לֹא רָאִיתָ עַד יוֹם אַחֲרוֹן
וְגַם צָר אַל יִרְאֵנִי וָחַי.

וַיֹּאמַר: מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים,
כִּי אִתִּי אַתְּ, שִׂמְחַת עֲנִיִּים.

א. שִׁיר לְאֵשֶׁת־נְעוּרִים

לֹא הַכֹּל הֲבָלִים, בִּתִּי,
לֹא הַכֹּל הֲבָלִים וָהֶבֶל.
גַּם לַכֶּסֶף הֵפַרְתִּי בְּרִיתִי,
גַּם זֵרִיתִי יָמַי לַהֶבֶל.
רַק אַחֲרַיִךְ הָלַכְתִּי, בִּתִּי,
כַּצַּוָּאר אַחֲרֵי הַחֶבֶל.

כִּי עָדִית מִטְפַּחְתֵּךְ, בִּתִּי,
כִּי אָמַרְתְּ לִי: הַבֵּט וּרְאֵנָּה,
וָאֶדּוֹר לֹא לִנְשׁוֹךְ פִּתִּי,
עַד שִׁנַּי מִבָּסְרֵךְ תִּקְהֶינָה.
וָאֶדּוֹר לִרְאוֹתֵךְ, בִּתִּי,
עַד עֵינַי מֵרְאוֹתֵךְ תִּכְהֶינָה.

וְהִכָּה הַחֳלִי, בִּתִּי,
וְהָעֹנִי כִּסָּה פָּנֵינוּ.

I called sickness my home,
I called poverty our sons.
We were less than dogs, my daughter,
Dogs ran away from us.

Then iron rose up, my daughter.
It cut my head away from you.
There was nothing left except
My dust pursuing your shoes.
Iron shall be broken, my daughter,
But never my thirst for you.

There is no end to strength, my daughter,
Only the body is smashed like a shard.
Joy did not visit my house,
The earth prepared my bed.
But the day you rejoice, my daughter,
From the earth my eyes shall be glad.

My daughter, the joyful day still will come.
For us a hand and a rope remain.
You will fall to my land of promise,
With a rope they will lower you down to me.
All is not vain, my daughter,
All is not vanity.

וָאוֹמַר לָחֳלִי בֵּיתִי,
וְלָעֹנִי קָרָאתִי בָּנֵנוּ.
וַנִּדַּל מִכְּלָבִים בִּתִּי,
וַיָּנוּסוּ כְּלָבִים מִפָּנֵינוּ.

אָז עָלָה הַבַּרְזֶל, בִּתִּי,
וַיָּסִיר גַּם רֹאשִׁי מֵאֵלַיִךְ.
וְדָבָר לֹא נוֹתַר, בִּלְתִּי
עֲפָרִי הַמְרַדֵּף נְעָלַיִךְ.
כִּי בַּרְזֶל יִשָּׁבֵר, בִּתִּי,
וּצְמָאִי לֹא נִשְׁבַּר אֵלַיִךְ.

לֹא לַכֹּחַ יֵשׁ קֵץ, בִּתִּי,
רַק לַגּוּף הַנִּשְׁבָּר כַּחֶרֶס.
לֹא פָּקְדָה הַשִּׂמְחָה בֵּיתִי
וַתַּצַּע אֲדָמָה לִי עֶרֶשׂ.
אַךְ בְּיוֹם בּוֹ תָּגִיל בִּתִּי
גַּם תָּגֵלְנָה עֵינַי מֵאֶרֶץ.

עוֹד יָבֹא יוֹם שִׂמְחָה, בִּתִּי,
עוֹד גַּם לָנוּ בּוֹ יָד וָחֶבֶל.
וְצָנַחַתְּ עַל אַדְמַת בְּרִיתִי
וְאֵלַי יוֹרִידוּךְ בְּחֶבֶל.
לֹא הַכֹּל הֲבָלִים, בִּתִּי,
לֹא הַכֹּל הֲבָלִים וָהֶבֶל.

2. A Convert Comes to the City*

The city is beseiged, none may enter or leave,
But I shall pass through secure.
I who remember the deathly poor
Stand at the entrance over your sleep.

I entreat with powerless hands,
Like fire and spear I defend.
For the appointed time I strengthen you against loss,
I who remember, I the witness.

I pray each day that you will expire like a candle,
That the sword shall drive you to me.
Each day for your sake I beg at the door
That you shall live another eve.

I will bring you the very last crust.
Your name I shall call out, the first.
The water jug to your broken mouth I guide,
I the elder, I who provide.

For, behold, the living shall not save the living.
To cover you with love like water, I come.
It is strange to my brothers, this love unforgiving,
Revealed like rapine at noon.

ב. גֵּר בָּא לָעִיר

הָעִיר נְצוּרָה מִבּוֹא וּמִצֵּאת,
וַאֲנִי אֶעֱבוֹר לָבֶטַח.
אֲנִי הַזּוֹכֵר, הֶעָנִי־כַּמֵּת,
אֶעֱמוֹד עַל שְׁנָתֵךְ בַּפֶּתַח.

וּבְאֶפֶס־כַּפּוֹת אֲחוֹנֵן,
וּכְאֵשׁ וַחֲנִית אֲגוֹנֵן,
וּבְטֶרֶם־אָבְדָן אֲאַמְּצֵךְ לַמּוֹעֵד,
אֲנִי הַזּוֹכֵר, אֲנִי הָעֵד.

יוֹם־יוֹם אֶתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁתִּכְלִי כְּמוֹ נֵר
שֶׁאֵלַי תְּרֻדְּפִי בֶּחָרֶב.
וְיוֹם־יוֹם בַּעֲדֵךְ עַל פְּתָחִים אֲחַזֵּר,
לְמַעַן תִּחְיִי עוֹד עֶרֶב.

פַּת לָךְ אָבִיא אַחֲרוֹנָה.
בְּשֵׁם לָךְ אֶקְרָא רִאשׁוֹנָה.
הַחֵמֶת אַגִּיעַ אֶל פִּיךְ שֶׁחָרַב,
אֲנִי הַדּוֹאֵג, אֲנִי הַשָּׂב.

כִּי הִנֵּה לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ הַחַי אֶת־הַחַי.
וְאָבוֹא כַּסּוּתֵךְ אַהֲבָה כַּמַּיִם,
אַהֲבָה לֹא סוֹלַחַת, נָכְרִית לְאַחַי,
גְּלוּיָה כְּשֹׁד בַּצָּהֳרַיִם.

And by God you shall swear to me
To draw strength from catastrophe,
To cry out as it reaches your soul,
To me the last one of all.

For the city is beseiged, none may enter or leave
But I, secure, pass through.
The dead man said: I die at the entrance
Seventy times for you.

Like spear and fire I implore
I pour more than human strength into you.
Against loss like a candle I snuff you out,
I the stranger, I the convert.

The Abandoned

My mother left me at the foot of the fence,
Face wrinkled and silent. On my back.
As if out of a well I watched her from below —
As if from a battle she fled.
As if out of a well I watched from below,
The moon over us was a candle glow.

וְאַתְּ בֵּאלֹהִים הִשָּׁבְעִי,
כִּי אוֹנִים מִצָּרָה תִּשְׁאֲבִי,
וּבְהַגִּיעַ עַד נֶפֶשׁ, תָּרִימִי קוֹל,
אֵלַי הָאַחֲרוֹן. הָאַחֲרוֹן לַכֹּל.

כִּי הָעִיר נְצוּרָה מִבּוֹא וּמִצֵּאת,
וַאֲנִי אֶעֱבוֹר לָבֶטַח.
בַּעֲדֵךְ, בַּעֲדֵךְ, אָמַר הַמֵּת,
שִׁבְעָתַיִם אָמוּת בַּפֶּתַח.

וּכְאֵשׁ וַחֲנִית אֲחוֹנֵן,
וְכֹחַ לֹא־אִישׁ בָּךְ אֶתֵּן,
וּבְטֶרֶם אָבְדָן אֲכַבֵּךְ כְּמוֹ נֵר,
אֲנִי הַנָּכְרִי. אֲנִי הַגֵּר.

הָאֲסוּפִי

הִנִּיחַתְנִי אִמִּי לְרַגְלֵי הַגָּדֵר,
קְמוּט פָּנִים וְשׁוֹקֵט. עַל גַּב.
וָאַבִּיט בָּהּ מִלְּמַטָּה, כְּמוֹ מִן־הַבְּאֵר, –
עַד נוּסָהּ כְּהַנָּס מִן הַקְּרָב.
וָאַבִּיט בָּהּ מִלְּמַטָּה, כְּמוֹ מִן הַבְּאֵר,
וְיָרֵחַ עָלֵינוּ הוֹרֵם כְּמוֹ נֵר.

But that night before the dawn shone,
The time had come and I slowly rose.
To her house I returned as a ball that rolls
Goes back to the kicking foot.
I returned to her house like a ball that rolls.
With shadowy hands I embraced her throat.

Like a leech, before the Almighty's eyes,
She tore me away from her throat.
But as night came back, I returned.
And this became our rule by rote.
Each night, as before, to her I return
And she bows to retribution's yoke.

The wide-open doors of her dreams I gained,
In her dream I am there alone.
Bent the love of our souls remained
Like a bow, from the day when I was born.
Bent the love of our souls remained
Never given or taken again.

So till the end God did not remove me
From my parent's heart that stormed.
And I torn away before I was weaned,
Was not weaned and will not be torn.

אַךְ בְּטֶרֶם הַשַּׁחַר הֵאִיר, אוֹתוֹ לֵיל,
קַמְתִּי אַט כִּי הִגִּיעָה עֵת
וָאָשׁוּב בֵּית אִמִּי כְּכַדּוּר מִתְגַּלְגֵּל
הַחוֹזֵר אֶל רַגְלֵי הַבּוֹעֵט,
וָאָשׁוּב בֵּית אִמִּי כְּכַדּוּר מִתְגַּלְגֵּל
וָאֶחֱבֹק צַוָּארָהּ בְּיָדַיִם שֶׁל צֵל.

מֵעֲלֵי צַוָּארָהּ, לְעֵינֵי כֹּל יָכוֹל,
הִיא קְרָעַתְנִי כְּמוֹ עֲלוּקָה.
אַךְ שָׁב לַיְלָה וְשַׁבְתִּי אֵלֶיהָ כִּתְמוֹל,
וַתְּהְיֶה לָנוּ זֹאת לְחֻקָּה:
בְּשׁוּב לַיְלָה וְשַׁבְתִּי אֵלֶיהָ כִּתְמוֹל
וְהִיא לַיְלָה כּוֹרַעַת לַגְּמוּל וְלָעֹל.

וְדַלְתוֹת חֲלוֹמָהּ לִי פְּתוּחוֹת לִרְוָחָה
וְאֵין אִישׁ בַּחֲלוֹם מִלְּבַדִּי.
כִּי נוֹתְרָה אַהֲבַת־נַפְשׁוֹתֵינוּ דְּרוּכָה
כְּמוֹ קֶשֶׁת, מִיּוֹם הִוָּלְדִי.
כִּי נוֹתְרָה אַהֲבַת נַפְשׁוֹתֵינוּ דְּרוּכָה
וְלָעַד לֹא נִתֶּנֶת וְלֹא לְקוּחָה.

וְעַל כֵּן עַד אַחֲרִית לֹא הֵסִיר אוֹתִי אֵל
מֵעַל לֵב הוֹרָתִי הַצּוֹעֵק
וַאֲנִי – שֶׁנִּתַּקְתִּי מִבְּלִי הִגָּמֵל –
לֹא נִגְמַלְתִּי וְלֹא אֶנָּתֵק.

And I, torn away before I was weaned,
Enter her house, lock the door.

She aged in my prison, grew thin and slight.
Her face grew as wrinkled as mine.
Then my little hands clothed her in white
As a mother dresses the living child.
Then my little hands dressed her in white,
I carried her off without making a sign.

I left her there at the foot of the fence,
On her back. She was watchful, subdued.
She looked at me smiling as out of a well.
We had finished our battle, we knew.
She looked at me smiling as out of a well.
Over us, like a candle, was the moon.

The Maid

Silent the maid with the spindle spun,
Like brightest pomegranate, scarlet thread.
"She weaves me garments, royal ones,"
The king within his own heart said.

וַאֲנִי שֶׁנִּתַּקְתִּי מִבְּלִי הִגָּמֵל
נִכְנַס אֶל בֵּיתָהּ וְהַשַּׁעַר נוֹעֵל.

הִיא זָקְנָה בְּכִלְאִי וַתִּדַּל וַתִּקְטַן
וּפָנֶיהָ קָמְטוּ כְּפָנַי.
אָז יָדַי הַקְּטַנּוֹת הִלְבִּישׁוּהָ לָבָן
כְּמוֹ אֵם אֶת הַיֶּלֶד הַחַי.
אָז יָדַי הַקְּטַנּוֹת הִלְבִּישׁוּהָ לָבָן
וָאֶשָּׂא אוֹתָהּ בְּלִי לְהַגִּיד לָהּ לְאָן.

וָאַנִּיחַ אוֹתָהּ לְרַגְלֵי הַגָּדֵר
צוֹפִיָּה וְשׁוֹקֶטֶת, עַל גַּב.
וַתַּבִּיט בִּי שׁוֹחֶקֶת, כְּמוֹ מִן הַבְּאֵר,
וַנֵּדַע כִּי סִיַּמְנוּ הַקְּרָב.
וַתַּבִּיט בִּי שׁוֹחֶקֶת כְּמוֹ מִן הַבְּאֵר.
וְיָרֵחַ עָלֵינוּ הוּרַם כְּמוֹ נֵר.

הָעַלְמָה

דֹּם טָוְתָה הָעַלְמָה בַּפֶּלֶךְ
חוּט שָׁנִי כְּרִמּוֹן שָׁחוּט.
וְאָמַר בִּלְבָבוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ:
הִיא טֹוָה לִי בִּגְדֵי מַלְכוּת.

Silent the maid with the spindle spun,
Darkening daylight, thread so black.
In the dungeon said the highwayman:
"She spins me robes for the axman's block."

Silent the maid with the spindle spun
Golden thread like lightning's blade.
On the highway said the clown:
"She spins me costumes for the play."

Silent the maid with the spindle spun
Grey thread, source of all that is worn.
Said the dog and the beggar then:
She spins a robe for us who mourn.

Then she wove the spindled thread,
Bunched them together, put them away.
Down to the brook she stepped,
And bathed her flesh bright as day.

Then she put on the cloth of her spinning
And lovely grew forever.
Since then, she is highwayman and king
Clown and beggar.

דֹּם טָוְתָה הָעַלְמָה בַּפֶּלֶךְ
חוּט שָׁחֹר, הַמַּחְשִׁיךְ אוֹר יוֹם.
וְאָמַר הַשּׁוֹדֵד בַּכֶּלֶא:
הִיא טֹוָה לִי בִּגְדֵי גַּרְדּוֹם.

דֹּם טָוְתָה הָעַלְמָה בַּפֶּלֶךְ
חוּט זָהָב, כְּחַרְבוֹת בָּרָק.
וְאָמַר הַלּוּלְיָן בַּדֶּרֶךְ:
הִיא טֹוָה לִי בִּגְדֵי מִשְׂחָק.

דֹּם טָוְתָה הָעַלְמָה בַּפֶּלֶךְ
חוּט אֹפֶר, הוּא אֲבִי כָּל כְּסוּת.
וְאָמְרוּ פּוֹשֵׁט־יָד וָכֶלֶב:
הִיא טֹוָה לָנוּ בֶּגֶד בָּכוּת.

אָז אָרְגָה אֶת חוּטֵי הַפֶּלֶךְ
הָעַלְמָה, וַתִּתְּנֵם בַּסָּף,
וַתֵּרֶד אֶל מֵי הַפֶּלֶג
וַתִּרְחַץ אֶת בְּשָׂרָהּ הַצַּח.

וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶת מַטְוֵה הַפֶּלֶךְ
לְשִׂמְלָה לָהּ, וַתִּיף לָעַד.
וּמֵאָז הִיא שׁוֹדֵד וָמֶלֶךְ
וְלוּלְיָן וּפוֹשֶׁטֶת־יָד.

Songs of the Stream

"A choir of small voices . . ."
Paul Verlaine

1. The Stream Sings to the Stone

Cool in its dream, I kissed the stone:
It is the quiet, I am the song,
It is the riddle, I make it known,
From one eternity we both were hewn.

I kissed the stone, its lonely flesh.
I am the betrayer, it is vowed faithfulness.
It is the constant, mystery of creation,
I am change, its revelation.

I know I touched a heart grown mute.
It is the world and I the poet.

2. The Tree Sings to the Stream

Who swept away my gilded fall,
With the falling leaves my blood did bear,
But shall see my spring return
To him in the circling of the year.

מִשִּׁירֵי הַנַּחַל

„מַקְהֵלַת קוֹלוֹת קְטַנִּים"
פּוֹל וֶרְלֶן.

א. הַנַּחַל שָׁר לָאֶבֶן

אֶת הָאֶבֶן נָשַׁקְתִּי בְּצִנַּת חֲלוֹמָהּ,
כִּי אֲנִי הַמִּזְמוֹר וְהִיא הַדְּמָמָה,
כִּי הִיא הַחִידָה וַאֲנִי הֶחָד,
כִּי שְׁנֵינוּ קֹרַצְנוּ מִנֶּצַח אֶחָד.

אֶת הָאֶבֶן נָשַׁקְתִּי, אֶת בְּשָׂרָהּ הַבּוֹדֵד.
הִיא שְׁבוּעַת אֱמוּנִים וַאֲנִי הַבּוֹגֵד,
אֲנִי הַחוֹלֵף וְהִיא הַקַּיָּם,
הִיא סוֹדוֹת הַבְּרִיאָה, וַאֲנִי – גִּלּוּיָם.

וָאֵדַע כִּי נָגַעְתִּי בְּלֵב נֶאֱלָם:
אֲנִי הַמְּשׁוֹרֵר וְהִיא – הָעוֹלָם.

ב. הָעֵץ שָׁר לַנַּחַל

אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא אֶת סְתָוַי הַזָּהוֹב,
אֶת דָּמַי בְּשַׁלֶּכֶת גָּרַף,
אֲשֶׁר יִרְאֶה אֲבִיבִי כִּי יָשׁוּב
עִם תְּקוּפַת הַשָּׁנָה אֵלָיו,

My brother the stream, forever lost,
Who is new each day, and still one thing,
My brother who flows between his shores
As I flow between fall and spring.

For I am the blossom and I am the fruit,
I am my future, my past I am.
I am the barren trunk of the tree,
And you are my season, my poem.

3. The Moon Sings to the Stream

I am unity on high,
But in the deep I am the multiple,
From the stream looks up to me
My image, my double.

I am truth on high,
I am fiction in the deep,
From the stream looks up to me
My image's foiled destiny.

Above I am wrapped in silence,
In the deep I sing and murmur,
On high I am the Lord
In the stream I am the prayer.

אָחִי הַנַּחַל, הָאוֹבֵד לָעַד,
הֶחָדָשׁ יוֹם־יוֹם וְאַחֵר וְאֶחָד,
אָחִי הַזֹּרֵם בֵּין שְׁנֵי חוֹפָיו
הַזּוֹרֵם כָּמוֹנִי בֵּין אָבִיב וּסְתָיו.

כִּי אֲנִי הַנִּצָּן וַאֲנִי הַפְּרִי,
אֲנִי עָתִידִי וַאֲנִי עֲבָרִי,
אֲנִי הַגֶּזַע הֶעֲרִירִי,
וְאַתָּה – זְמַנִּי וְשִׁירִי.

ג. הַיָּרֵחַ שָׁר לַנַּחַל

אֲנִי הַיִּחוּד בַּמָּרוֹם,
אֲנִי הָרִבּוּי בַּמְּצֻלָּה.
תַּשְׁקִיף מִן הַנַּחַל אֵלַי
דְּמוּתִי, דְּמוּתִי הַכְּפוּלָה.

אֲנִי הָאֱמֶת בַּמָּרוֹם,
אֲנִי הַבְּדָיָה בַּמְּצֻלָּה,
תַּשְׁקִיף מִן הַנַּחַל אֵלַי
דְּמוּתִי בִּכְזַב גּוֹרָלָהּ.

לְמַעְלָה – עוֹטֶה דוּמִיּוֹת,
הוֹמֶה, מְזַמֵּר בַּמְּצֻלָּה.
אֲנִי בַּמָּרוֹם – הָאֵל,
בַּנַּחַל אֲנִי הַתְּפִלָּה.

4. The Girl Sings to the Stream

Where does the stream carry my small face?
Why does he widen my eyes?
Far off in the pine wood is my home
Sadly my pine trees sigh.

The stream lured me with a happy song,
Sang out and called my name.
I left my mother's house,
I followed the sound and came.

And I am her young and only child,
A cruel stream before me lies —
Where does he carry my small face?
Why does he widen my eyes?

5. The Blade of Grass Sings to the Stream

Also for little ones, just like me,
One of myriad more,
Also for children of poverty
On disappointment's shore
The stream murmurs, murmurs
Murmurs with love.

ד. הַיַּלְדָּה שָׁרָה לַנַּחַל

לְאָן יִשָּׂא הַזֶּרֶם אֶת פָּנַי הַקְּטַנִּים?
לָמָּה הוּא קוֹרֵעַ אֶת עֵינַי?
בֵּיתִי הַרְחֵק בְּחֹרְשַׁת אֳרָנִים,
עֲצוּבָה אִוְשַׁת אֳרָנַי.

פִּתַּנִי הַנַּחַל בְּזֶמֶר־גִּיל,
רִנֵּן וְקָרָא בִּשְׁמִי,
הָלַכְתִּי אֵלָיו אַחֲרֵי הַצְּלִיל,
נָטַשְׁתִּי אֶת בֵּית אִמִּי.

וַאֲנִי יְחִידָה לָהּ, רַכָּה בְּשָׁנִים,
וְנַחַל אַכְזָר לְפָנַי –
לְאָן הוּא נוֹשֵׂא אֶת פָּנַי הַקְּטַנִּים?
לָמָּה הוּא קוֹרֵעַ אֶת עֵינַי?

ה. גִּבְעוֹל הַדֶּשֶׁא שָׁר לַנַּחַל

גַּם לִקְטַנִּים כָּמוֹנִי,
אֶחָד מִנִּי רְבָבָה,
גַּם לְיַלְדֵי הָעֹנִי
עַל חוֹף הָאַכְזָבָה
הוֹמֶה, הוֹמֶה הַנַּחַל,
הוֹמֶה בְּאַהֲבָה.

The caressing sun
At times touches him.
My image, the reflected one,
Is in the water green
In the depth of the river
All of us are deep.

And my image deepening
On its way to the sea
Is swallowed and erased
On the brink of the unseen.
But with the stream's voice
The silent soul
With the stream's psalm
The world extols.

On Blossoming

(excerpts)

for Avraham Ben Yitzhak

I

Scarlet, warm and heavy in black velvet leaves
The blossoming of castor plant overnight.
Against the barbed-wire fence the row leans.

הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ הַלּוֹטֶפֶת
תִּגַּע בּוֹ לִפְרָקִים,
וְגַם דְּמוּתִי נִשְׁקֶפֶת
בְּמַיִם יְרֻקִּים
וּבִמְצֻלַּת הַנַּחַל
כֻּלָּנוּ עֲמֻקִּים.

דְּמוּתִי הַמִּתְעַמֶּקֶת
בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֶל הַיָּם
נִבְלַעַת וְנִמְחֶקֶת
עַל סַף הַנֶּעְלָם.
וְעִם קוֹלוֹ שֶׁל נַחַל
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַשּׁוֹתֶקֶת
עִם שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר הַנַּחַל
תַּגִּיד שִׁבְחֵי עוֹלָם.

עַל הַפְּרִיחָה

(מִמַּחְרוֹזֶת הַשִּׁירִים)

לאברהם בן יצחק

א

פְּרִיחַת הַקִּיקָיוֹן אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה בִּן־לַיִל
שָׁנִי כָּבֵד וָחַם בִּשְׁחוֹר עֲלֵי קְטִיפָה.
שְׁדֵרָה נִשְׁעֶנֶת אֶל גָּדֵר שֶׁל תַּיִל.

The sheep wearily grow quiet,
Returning to the pens. The sensuous blue
Drops from its shoulder a cloud of white.

All this, like light broken in the waterfall, somewhile will pass.
All this, in smell of grain and silence will rise anew,
And in red sunset, in tenderness of grass

As if out of the quiet of my blood it grew.

II

Old woman, blue eyed and sun burned.
In her stature's crown — greyhair, suffering persist.
The pail turns silver. From the doors of the barn

Rises the fresh and fatty mist.
Life's law in her milking hands,
As when the rope quiet sailors twist.

Docile cows. A morning without clouds.
Woman above the white that slowly spills
Plain light and the intricate secret of the ancient.

The necromancer over her spells.

הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר רָגְעוּ לָעֲיֵפָה
חוֹזְרוֹת אֶל הַדִּירִים. הַתְּכֵלֶת הָרוֹגֶשֶׁת
הִצְנִיחָה עָב צְחוֹרָה מֵעַל כְּתֵפָהּ.

כָּל זֶה יֹאבַד אֵי־אָז כְּאוֹר נִשְׁבָּר בָּאֶשֶׁד,
כָּל זֶה יָקוּם לָעַד בְּרֵיחַ בַּר וּדְמִי
וּבַשְּׁקִיעָה אָדֹם וְרַךְ הַדֶּשֶׁא

כְּאִלּוּ הוּא צָמַח מִשֶּׁקֶט שֶׁל דָּמִי.

ב

זְקֵנָה, כְּחֻלַּת־עֵינַיִם וּנְשׁוּפֶת.
עֲטֶרֶת קוֹמָתָהּ – שֵׂיבָה וָסֵבֶל.
מַכְסִיף הַדְּלִי. מִשַּׁעֲרֵי הָרֶפֶת

דָּשֵׁן וְרַעֲנָן עוֹלֶה הַהֶבֶל.
דִּין שֶׁל חַיִּים – יָדֶיהָ הַחוֹלְבוֹת.
כָּךְ סַפָּנִים שֶׁקְטִים יֹאחֲזוּ בַּחֶבֶל.

כְּנִיעַת פָּרוֹת. וּבֹקֶר לֹא־עָבֹת.
אִשָּׁה מֵעַל לַלֹּבֶן הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ.
וְאוֹר־חֻלִּין וְסוֹד קַדְמוּת עָבֹת

וּבַעֲלַת־הָאוֹב עֲלֵי כְּשָׁפֶיהָ.

III

That death in his windows would rise
We knew: Cold and clear, like the skin
Of a grape, was his glance that cried.

And through the skin flickered and drew near
A brimming world, gold, like a sated day,
Cities and rivers, and a motleyed crowd of Springs

With a booty of blossoms burgeoning.
Loaded down he trudged to the boundary.
So a weary ox at wane of day

Brings the harvest to the granary.

VIII

How shall we bring our dying heart up
To a new day as the light grows?
As when the wine bubbles in the cup,

As when the sky girds on his bow,
As when morning dances in the pit
And sunset bends to the river's cheek below.

ג

כִּי מָוֶת יַעֲלֶה בְּחַלּוֹנָיו
יָדַעְנוּ: מַבָּטוֹ הַמִּשְׁתַּוֵּעַ
הָיָה שָׁקוּף וְקַר כְּזַג עֵנָב.

וּבְעַד הַזָּג הִבְלִיחַ וְקָרַב
עוֹלָם גָּדוּשׁ, צָהֹב, כְּיוֹם שָׂבֵעַ,
עָרִים, גַּם נְהָרוֹת, גַּם עֵרֶב־רַב

שֶׁל אֲבִיבִים וּשְׁלַל פְּרִיחָה בּוֹקֵעַ.
וְהוּא הָלַךְ עָמוּס עַד קְצֵה הַגְּבוּל.
כָּךְ שׁוֹר עָיֵף עִם יוֹם שׁוֹקֵעַ

יוֹבִיל הַגָּרְנָה אֶת הַיְבוּל.

ח

אֵיךְ אֶת לִבֵּנוּ הַגּוֹסֵס נָבִיאָה
אֶל יוֹם חָדָשׁ בְּהֵעָלוֹת הָאוֹר?
כְּאָז תּוֹסֵס הַיַּיִן בַּגָּבִיעַ,

כְּאָז רָקִיעַ אֶת קַשְׁתּוֹ יַחְגּוֹר,
כְּאָז הַבֹּקֶר מְפַזֵּז בַּשַּׁחַת
וּלְחִי־שְׁקִיעוֹת נִצְמָד לִלְחִי הַיְאוֹר.

And only we, by the terror hit,
Dream-robbed, witnesses from the fire saved,
Our blossoming land we will lift

Like a wreath of mourning unto the grave.

Dialogue

He

In your silence sank as into a deep sea
My bitter word. My love listens attentively —
From echoless distances wafts to me
The peace of your flesh without kindness and mercy.

Your body to me was exile and foreignness.
From your glance, as from a pool, I see
My image acting toward myself most cruelly,
My dark soul, from your clearness.

My beggared state — from out of abundance and loveliness.
For me you are the road to double loneliness.

וְרַק אֲנַחְנוּ, הֲלוּמֵי הַפַּחַד,
גְּזוּלֵי־חֲלוֹם, עֵדֵי הַתַּבְעֵרָה,
נִשָּׂא אֶת אַדְמָתֵנוּ הַפּוֹרַחַת

כְּנֵזֶר אֲבֵלוּת אֱלֵי קְבוּרָה.

דו־שִׂיחַ

הוא

בִּשְׁתִיקָתֵךְ שָׁקַע כְּבִמְצֻלָה
דְּבָרִי הַמַּר. אַהֲבָתִי קַשֶּׁבֶת –
מִמֶּרְחַבִּים אֵין־הֵד אֵלַי נוֹשֶׁבֶת
שַׁלְוַת בְּשָׂרֵךְ בְּלִי חֶסֶד וְחֶמְלָה.

גּוּפֵךְ הָיָה לִי נֵכָר וְגוֹלָה.
מִמַּבָּטֵךְ כְּמֵאֲגַם חוֹזֶרֶת
תָּמִיד אֵלַי דְּמוּתִי הַמִּתְאַכְזֶרֶת,
מִצְּלִילוּתֵךְ – נַפְשִׁי הָאֲפֵלָה.

אֶבְיוֹנוּתִי – מִשֶּׁפַע וְתִפְאֶרֶת.
אַתְּ לִי הַדֶּרֶךְ לְבְדִידוּת כְּפוּלָה.

She

Light rushed through. It struck the pupils of my eyes,
In its flame all other images dimmed.
You have made me a wasteland, a blind wilderness.
Before me you have made the fortressed wall rise.

Here am I closed and enclosed within myself,
Scorched by loneliness, toward a strange world's lands
I carry my dust in my own hands.
I would be glad of my own death.

But woe, woe to us both if I survive
And out of these ashes I rise new born
Opening my eyes to see twicefold,

And this time next year nothing remained
Save the memory of your foreign form
And the taste on my lips of bitter mold.

Remembrance of Beginnings of Things

We shall remember the wheat stalk in the greenness of her youth,
The time she stood erect with head to heaven,
Thin was her blade but straight and proud.
And now bent is her head to the ground,

הִיא

הֵגִיחַ אוֹר. הִכָּה עַל אִישׁוֹנַי,
בְּשַׁלְהַבְתּוֹ כָּבְתָה כָּל דְּמוּת אַחֶרֶת.
שַׂמְתַּנִי יְשִׁימוֹן, צִיָּה עִוֶּרֶת.
חוֹמָה בְּצוּרָה הִצַּבְתָּ בְּפָנַי.

הִנֵּה אֲנִי סֹגֶרֶת וּמְסֻגֶּרֶת,
שְׂרוּפַת בְּדִידוּת, אֶל מוּל עוֹלָם נָכְרִי
נָשָׂאתִי בְּיָדַי אֶת עֲפָרִי
וּבִכְלוֹתִי הָיִיתִי מְאֻשֶּׁרֶת.

אַךְ אוֹיָה, אוֹי לִשְׁנֵינוּ אִם הָיָה
וּמִן הָאֵפֶר קַמְתִּי לִתְחִיָּה
וְנִפְקְחוּ עֵינַי לִרְאוֹת כִּפְלַיִם,

וְלֹא נוֹתַר דָּבָר כָּעֵת חַיָּה
זוּלַת זִכְרוֹן דְּמוּתְךָ הַנָּכְרִיָּה
וְטַעַם לַעֲנָה עַל הַשְּׂפָתַיִם.

זִכְרוֹן רֵאשִׁית דְּבָרִים

נִזְכּוֹר אֶת הַשִּׁבֹּלֶת בִּירַקְרַק נְעוּרֶיהָ,
עֵת כִּי עָמְדָה זְקוּפָה וְרֹאשָׁהּ לַשָּׁמַיִם,
דַּק גִּבְעוֹלָהּ אַף יָשָׁר וְגֵא הוּא.
וְעַכְשָׁיו שַׁח רֹאשָׁהּ לָאָרֶץ,

For heavy is the gold of her ripeness,
The crown of her full pregnancy.
Beautiful are her seasons.

We shall remember the tree in the middle of his spring:
His blossoms were white and pink,
Trembling sunbeams glimmered in him on the branch
And the sweet resin dropped to earth
Like the bride's tears on the day of her heart's joy.
Now he stands in the abundance of his apples
Carrying his beautiful burden motionless
Knowing the spring of things to come.

We shall surely remember these things
In the change of the year's circuit and in the passage of day and night,
How the moon was fragile
And very full, then round and died,
Yet its youth would be renewed.

We shall surely remember the beginning of our love
When she was tremulous as a fawn,
A beautiful doe lowering her eyes,
And there she has become full grown
With her open face
And her deep voice.
Beautiful are her seasons.

כִּי כָּבֵד זְהַב־בַּגְרוּתָהּ,
עֲטֶרֶת הֶרְיוֹנָהּ הַמָּלֵא.
יָפוֹת עִתּוֹתֶיהָ.

נִזְכּוֹר אֶת הָאִילָן בִּדְמִי אֲבִיבוֹ:
פְּרָחָיו הָיוּ לְבָנִים וּוְרֻדִּים,
זָעוּ בּוֹ אוֹרוֹת מְרַטְּטִים בְּעֶנֶף
וְהַשְּׂרָף הַמָּתוֹק נָטַף לָאָרֶץ
כְּדִמְעוֹת כַּלָּה בְּיוֹם שִׂמְחַת־לִבָּהּ.
וְעַכְשָׁיו הוּא עוֹמֵד בִּשְׁלַל תַּפּוּחָיו
נוֹשֵׂא אֶת הָעֹל הַיָּפֶה וְלֹא יָנוּעַ,
יוֹדֵעַ אֲבִיבֵי הַבָּאוֹת.

זָכוֹר נִזְכּוֹר אֶת הַדְּבָרִים
בִּתְמוּרַת תּוֹר הַשָּׁנָה וַחֲלִיפוֹת יוֹם וָלַיְלָה,
כֵּיצַד הָיָה הַסַּהַר דַּק־לְהִשָּׁבֵר
וּמָלֵא מְאֹד וְהֶעְגִּיל וְגָוַע,
וְחֻדְּשׁוּ נְעוּרָיו.

זָכוֹר נִזְכּוֹר רֵאשִׁית אַהֲבָתֵנוּ
בְּעוֹדָהּ רְהוּיָה כְּאַיֶּלֶת,
יַעֲלַת־חֵן מַשְׁפֶּלֶת עֵינַיִם,
וְהִנֵּה גָּדְלָה מְאֹד
וּפָנֶיהָ גְּלוּיִים
וְקוֹלָהּ עָמֹק.
יָפוֹת עִתּוֹתֶיהָ.

On This Day

On this day they break bread
And gather fruit into the basket,
On this day the sons return home
And the daughters await them in the doorway. . .
On this day the clouds parade in the heavens
To bring the tidings of blessed showers to wheatfield and garden.
And in the city, in the alleyways of market places,
Rise up the fragrances of butter and oil,
Sparkle the scales of the fishes,
The wine brims.

How can you die, my soul, on this day!

That is so lovely and full,
That is so overflowing and simple,
That is light,
That is day,
That is day like all days!

How can you go down to rest.
Before his tumult abates,
How can you bid him farewell
Before his clamor grows quiet,

בְּיוֹם זֶה

בְּיוֹם זֶה פּוֹרְסִים אֶת הַלֶּחֶם
וְאוֹסְפִים אֶת הַפְּרִי אֶל הַטֶּנֶא,
בְּיוֹם זֶה חוֹזְרִים הַבָּנִים הַבַּיְתָה
וְהַבָּנוֹת מַמְתִּינוֹת בַּפֶּתַח.
בְּיוֹם זֶה הוֹלְכִים עֲנָנִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם
לְבַשֵּׂר מְטַר שֶׁל בְּרָכָה לִשְׁדֵמָה וָגָן.
וּבָעִיר, בִּמְבוֹאֵי הַשְּׁוָקִים,
עוֹלִים רֵיחוֹת שֶׁל חֶמְאָה וָשֶׁמֶן,
מַבְרִיקִים קַשְׂקַשֵּׂי הַדָּגִים,
שׁוֹצֵף הַיַּיִן.

אֵיכָה תָּמוּתִי, נַפְשִׁי, בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה!

שֶׁהוּא יָפֶה וּמָלֵא,
שֶׁהוּא גָּדוּשׁ וּפָשׁוּט,
שֶׁהוּא אוֹר,
שֶׁהוּא יוֹם,
שֶׁהוּא יוֹם כְּכָל הַיָּמִים!

אֵיכָה תֵּרְדִי לִמְנוּחוֹת
בְּטֶרֶם יִשְׁקַע שְׁאוֹנוֹ,
אֵיכָה תֹּאמְרִי לוֹ שָׁלוֹם
בְּטֶרֶם יִדֹּם הֲמוֹנוֹ,

How can you walk mourning
Before his merriment is tarnished,

How can you visit your eternal night
Before you have kissed the first star?

Will There Yet Come

Will there yet come days of forgiveness and grace,
When you walk in the field as the innocent wayfarer walks,
And the soles of your feet the clover leaves caress,
Though stubble will sting you, sweet will be their stalks.

Or rain will overtake you its thronging drops tapping
On your shoulder, your chest, your throat, your gentle head bowed.
And you walk in the wet field, the quiet in you expanding
Like light in the hem of a cloud.

And you will breathe the odor of furrow, breathing and quiet,
And you will see mirrored in the gold puddle the sun above,
And simple will be these things and life, permitted to touch,
Permitted, permitted to love.

Slowly you will walk in the field. Alone. Unscorched by flame
Of conflagrations on roads that bristled with horror and blood. Again
You will be peaceful in heart, humble and bending
Like one of the grasses, like one of man.

אֵיכָה תֵּלְכִי אֲבֵלָה
בְּטֶרֶם יוּעַם שְׂשׂוֹנוֹ,

אֵיכָה תִּפְקְדִי לֵילֵךְ הַנִּצְחִי
בְּטֶרֶם נָשַׁקְתְּ לְכוֹכָב רִאשׁוֹן?

הַאֻמְנָם עוֹד יָבוֹאוּ

הַאֻמְנָם עוֹד יָבוֹאוּ יָמִים בִּסְלִיחָה וּבְחֶסֶד,
וְתֵלְכִי בַּשָּׂדֶה, וְתֵלְכִי בּוֹ כְּהֵלֵךְ הַתָּם,
וּמֵחֲשׂוֹף כַּף־רַגְלֵךְ יְלַטֵּף בַּעֲלֵי הָאַסְפֶּסֶת,
אוֹ שִׁלְפֵי־שִׁבֳּלִים יְדַקְרוּךְ וְתִמְתַּק דְּקִירָתָם.

אוֹ מָטָר יַשִּׂיגֵךְ בַּעֲדַת טִפּוֹתָיו הַדּוֹפֶקֶת
עַל כְּתֵפַיִךְ, חָזֵךְ, צַוָּארֵךְ, וְרֹאשֵׁךְ רַעֲנָן,
וְתֵלְכִי בַּשָּׂדֶה הָרָטֹב וְיִרְחַב בָּךְ הַשֶּׁקֶט
כָּאוֹר בְּשׁוּלֵי הֶעָנָן.

וְנָשַׁמְתְּ אֶת רֵיחוֹ שֶׁל הַתֶּלֶם נָשׁוֹם וְרָגוֹעַ,
וְרָאִית אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּרְאִי־הַשְּׁלוּלִית הַזָּהָב,
וּפְשׁוּטִים הַדְּבָרִים וְחַיִּים, וּמֻתָּר בָּם לִנְגּוֹעַ,
וּמֻתָּר, וּמֻתָּר לֶאֱהֹב.

אַתְּ תֵּלְכִי בַּשָּׂדֶה. לְבַדֵּךְ. לֹא נִצְרֶבֶת בְּלַהַט
הַשְּׂרֵפוֹת, בַּדְּרָכִים שֶׁסָּמְרוּ מֵאֵימָה וּמִדָּם.
וּבְיֹשֶׁר־לֵבָב שׁוּב תִּהְיִי עֲנָוָה וְנִכְנַעַת
כְּאַחַד הַדְּשָׁאִים, כְּאַחַד הָאָדָם.

IV

The Younger Poets

המשוררים הצעירים

Birth

The rain has passed.

And yet from roofs and trees
It sings in my ears
And covers my head
With a bluish bridal-veil.

Good for you, my God,
In your net the child has been caught.
Now I shall bring leaf close to leaf
Watch how leaf covers leaf
And the drops join,
Then I will call the swallows
To betrothal from my sky.
And crown my windows with flower pots.

Good for you, my God,
In your net the child has been caught.
I open my eyes —
My earth is very wide
And all a beaten work
Of knobby buds,
Green.

Oh my God, how embraced we have been.

הֻלֶּדֶת

הַגֶּשֶׁם חָלַף.

וְהוּא עוֹד מִגַּגּוֹת וּמֵעֵצִים
מְזַמֵּר בְּאָזְנַי
וּמְכַסֶּה עַל רֹאשִׁי
בְּהִנּוּמָה כְּחַלְחֶלֶת.

אַשְׁרֶיךָ, אֱלֹהַי,
בְּרִשְׁתְּךָ נָצוֹד הַיֶּלֶד.
הִנֵּה אַקְרִיב עָלֶה אֶל עָלֶה
וְאֶרְאֶה אֵיךְ מְכַסֶּה עָלֶה עַל עָלֶה
וּמִתְמַזְּגִים הָרְסִיסִים.
וְאֶקְרָא לִכְלוּלוֹת מִשָּׁמַי
אֶת הַסִּיסִים.
וְכָל חַלּוֹנַי אַעֲטֵר עֲצִיצִים.

אַשְׁרֶיךָ, אֱלֹהַי,
בְּרִשְׁתְּךָ נָצוֹד הַיֶּלֶד.
אֲנִי פּוֹקֵחַ אֶת עֵינַי —
אַדְמָתִי רְחָבָה מְאֹד
וְכֻלָּהּ מִקְשָׁה
שֶׁל פִּטּוּרֵי צִיצִים
יְרֻקִּים.

הוֹ, אֱלֹהַי, אֵיךְ הָיִינוּ חֲבוּקִים!

Against the Wind

As we stood on the edge of the crag
A great wind began blowing
And all drew back disheveled,
But I grasped the sledge hammer,
Preserved here from a generation past,
And began to strike the rock

And the wind answered, Amen, Amen.

In Darkness

I stretched my hand out in front of me, into the darkness,
And my fingers sought light,
Trembling from the horror of uncertainty.

Therefore I gathered the fingers
Inward into the palm
And they opened up with a warm whimpering
Like puppies at the teats of the bitch.
So there was no end to the security
In the community of the closed fist.

Afterward the sun rose.

מוּל הָרוּחַ

כְּשֶׁעָמַדְנוּ עַל שְׂפַת הַצּוּק
הִתְחִילָה רוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה נוֹשֶׁבֶת
וְהַכֹּל מָשְׁכוּ אֶת בְּדוּרָם לְאָחוֹר
אַךְ אֲנִי תָּפַסְתִּי בַּמַּקֶּבֶת
הַשְּׁמוּרָה כָּאן מִלִּפְנֵי דוֹר
וְהִתְחַלְתִּי מַכֶּה בַּסֶּלַע

וְעָנְתָה הָרוּחַ אָמֵן סֶלָה.

בַּחשֶׁךְ

שָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת יָדִי לְפָנַי, אֶל תּוֹךְ הַחשֶׁךְ
וְהָאֶצְבָּעוֹת בִּקְשׁוּ אוֹר
רוֹעֲדוֹת מֵאֵימַת אִי הַוַּדָּאוּת.

אָסַפְתִּי, לָכֵן, אֶת הָאֶצְבָּעוֹת
פְּנִימָה אֶל תּוֹךְ הַכַּף
וּפָתְחוּ הֵן בִּנְהִימָה חֲמִימָה
כְּגוּרֵי כַלְבָּה עַל הַדַּדִּים
וְקֵץ לֹא הָיָה לְבִטְחוֹנָן
בִּצְוַת הָאֶגְרוֹף הַקָּמוּץ.

אַחַר כָּךְ עָלָה הַשַּׁחַר.

Isaac

Toward morning the sun strolled in the forest
Together with me and with father,
My right hand was in his left.

Like lightning flash, a knife between the trees
And I fear the terror of my eyes opposite the blood on the leaves.

Father, Father, come quickly and save Isaac
That no one may be missing at the noon meal.

It is I who am slaughtered, my son,
And my blood is already on the leaves.
Father's voice choked.
His face grew pale.

And I wanted to scream, writhing not to believe
And I opened my eyes wide.
And I awoke.

Bloodless was my right hand.

יִצְחָק

לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר טִיְּלָה שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּתוֹךְ הַיַּעַר
יַחַד עִמִּי וְעִם אַבָּא
וִימִינִי בִּשְׂמֹאלוֹ.

כְּבָרָק לַהֲבָה מַאֲכֶלֶת בֵּין הָעֵצִים.
וַאֲנִי יָרֵא כָּל־כָּךְ אֶת פַּחַד עֵינַי מוּל דָּם עַל הֶעָלִים.

אַבָּא אַבָּא מַהֵר וְהַצִּילָה אֶת יִצְחָק
וְלֹא יֶחְסַר אִישׁ בִּסְעֻדַּת הַצָּהֳרַיִם.

זֶה אֲנִי הַנִּשְׁחָט, בְּנִי,
וּכְבָר דָּמִי עַל הֶעָלִים.
וְאַבָּא נִסְתַּם קוֹלוֹ.
וּפָנָיו חִוְּרִים

וְרָצִיתִי לִצְעֹק, מְפַרְפֵּר לֹא לְהַאֲמִין
וְקוֹרֵעַ הָעֵינַיִם.
וְנִתְעוֹרַרְתִּי.

וְאָזְלַת־דָּם הָיְתָה יַד יָמִין

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Moses

I approached Moses and said to him:
Arrange the camps thus and so.
He looked at me
Arranged them as I bid.

And who did not see my honor then!
Sarah was there from childhood,
In her name I drafted plans for building a city.
There was the long-legged one from the girls' farm
There was Melvina from Rabat on Malta.
Dinah from the Italo-Yugoslav border.
And Ria from the northern lowland.

And very proud I turned to Moses
To teach him the correct way
But suddenly it became clear to me
That she who in my name
Was carved and fixed —
Was not there.

Moses, Moses, lead on the people.
See, I am so tired and still want to sleep,
I am still a young boy.

מֹשֶׁה

נִגַּשְׁתִּי אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאָמַרְתִּי לוֹ:
עֲרֹךְ אֶת הַמַּחֲנוֹת כָּךְ וְכָךְ.
הוּא הִסְתַּכֵּל בִּי
וְעָרַךְ לְפִי שֶׁאָמַרְתִּי.

וּמִי לֹא רָאָה אָז בִּכְבוֹדִי!
הָיְתָה שָׁם שָׂרָה מִן הַיַּלְדוּת
שֶׁעַל שְׁמָהּ תִּכַּנְתִּי לִבְנוֹת עִיר.
הָיְתָה שָׁם אֲרֻכַּת־הָרַגְלַיִם מֵחַוַּת־הַפּוֹעֲלוֹת.
הָיְתָה מֶלְוִינָה מֵרַבַּת אֲשֶׁר בְּמַלְטָה.
דִּינָה מֵהַגְּבוּל הָאִיטַלְקִי־הַיּוּגוֹסְלָבִי.
וְרִיָּה מֵהַשְּׁפֵלָה שֶׁבַּצָּפוֹן.

וְגֵאֶה מְאֹד מִהַרְתִּי אֶל מֹשֶׁה
לְהוֹרוֹתוֹ הַדֶּרֶךְ הַנְּכוֹנָה
וְהֻחְוַר לִי לְפִתְאֹם
כִּי זוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ שְׁמִי
חֲרוּתָה וּנְכוֹנָה –
אֵינֶנָּה.

מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה הַנְחֵה אֶת הָעָם,
רְאֵה, אֲנִי כָּל־כָּךְ עָיֵף וְרוֹצֶה לִישֹׁן עוֹד
אֲנִי עוֹדֶנִּי נַעַר.

A Song of Blue and Red

As if in snow you walked. And you walked in snow.
Bears rose against you! Papa bear. Mama bear. Baby bear.
You ran with all your strength. You imagined you were tumbling,
And in your eyes the terror of myriad years.

Now here you are. Years have passed. Passed.
The beautiful bears are gone. Gone. Will they ever reappear?
Tonight in our park the branches were broken.
And the trees still trickle blood and tears.

So that's how it is. We are young.
Yet, in memory, thousands of years.
See, all the imagined shapes arrayed outside your window
In a single straight line. Yet none is far, none is near.

On a Recollected Road

Today on a sandy road
Swirled by wind
Golden with sun
And remembered from past generations,
From the time I was among my predecessors,

שִׁיר כָּחֹל וְאָדֹם

כְּמוֹ בַּשֶּׁלֶג הָלַכְתְּ. וְאַתְּ הָלַכְתְּ בַּשֶּׁלֶג.
וְדֻבִּים עָלַיִךְ קָמוּ. דֹּב. דֻּבָּה. וְדֻבּוֹן.
וְרַצְתְּ בְּכָל כֹּחֵךְ. דִּמִּית – הִנֵּה כּוֹשֶׁלֶת.
וְכָל רֶגַע בְּעֵינַיִךְ – פַּחַד שָׁנִים רִבּוֹא.

וְהִנֵּה כָּאן הִנָּךְ. שָׁנִים עָבְרוּ. עָבָרוּ.
הָלְכוּ דֻּבִּים יָפִים. הָלְכוּ. הַאִם יָשׁוּבוּ?
בְּגַנֵּנוּ הַלַּיְלָה בַּדֵּי הָאֳרָנִים נִשְׁבָּרוּ.
וְהָאִילָנוֹת – דְּמָעוֹת וָדָם יָזוּבוּ.

הִנֵּה כִּי כֵן. צְעִירִים אֲנַחְנוּ.
וְאַלְפֵי שָׁנִים בַּזִּכָּרוֹן.
רְאִי, כָּל הַדְּמֻיּוֹת מוּל חַלּוֹנֵךְ תֵּעָרַכְנָה
שׁוּרָה אַחַת. וְאֵין רָחוֹק וְאֵין קָרוֹב.

בְּדֶרֶךְ זְכוּרָה

הַיּוֹם בְּדֶרֶךְ חוֹלִית
סְעוּרָה מֵרוּחַ
זְהֻבָּה מִשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וּזְכוּרָה מִדּוֹרוֹת
מֵהֱיוֹתִי בֵּין קוֹדְמַי

There came toward me many acquaintances.
Silent they looked into my eyes
As children look
Into the eyes of their begetter
And they passed along the road
Each one carrying under his arm
A volume…
Perhaps written there were
Conclusions.
Perhaps fanciful imaginings.
Perhaps laws of construction.
Perhaps the breaking down of every fence
So that there might be no barrier.
Perhaps calculations
For explosive material.
Perhaps the description of things
In a translucent language
Cold as mirrors.
Perhaps pictures of song
In a valley oozing droplets
And the words —
Crystals of heat and frost —
None stop trembling.

On a sandy road —

בָּאוּ מוּלִי רַבִּים מִמַּכָּרַי
שׁוֹתְקִים הִבִּיטוּ בְּעֵינַי
כְּהַבִּיט צֶאֱצָאִים
בְּעֵינֵי הַמּוֹלִיד
וְעָבְרוּ לַדֶּרֶךְ
כָּל אֶחָד נוֹשֵׂא תַּחַת בֵּית־שֶׁחְיוֹ
כֶּרֶךְ –
אֶפְשָׁר בָּם כְּתוּבִים
תּוֹלְדֵי מַחֲשָׁבָה.
אֶפְשָׁר דִּמְיוֹנֵי הֲזָיָה.
אֶפְשָׁר תּוֹרוֹת הַבִּנְיָן.
אֶפְשָׁר הֲרִיסַת כָּל גָּדֵר
שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה חוֹצֵץ.
אֶפְשָׁר סִפְרוֹת הַחִשּׁוּב
לַחֹמֶר הַמְּפוֹצֵץ.
אֶפְשָׁר תֵּאוּר הַדְּבָרִים
בְּלָשׁוֹן שְׁקוּפָה
וְקָרָה כַּמַּרְאוֹת.
אֶפְשָׁר מַרְאוֹת שֶׁל שִׁיר
בְּבִקְעָה נְטוּפָה
וְהַמִּלִּים –
גְּבִישֵׁי חֹם וּכְפוֹר –
אֵין חֲדֵלוֹת בָּן לִרְעֹד.

בְּדֶרֶךְ חוֹלִית –

Golden with sun remembered from past generations,
From the time I was among my predecessors —
Forever I shall walk, so will I walk
Ancient and young and begetting.

Evening of the Whirlwind

And still the sun rosies the fronts of houses
With the light of children's smiles,
With the flags of youth,
With holiday proclamations,
With the light of few voices,
In the mass of the oppressive silence
Before the lightning strikes again.

The Circle of Weeping

I heard the weeping of the newly born in its mother's bosom
And, as I returned, the weeping of the mother over her young.
And I did not stop to try to speak
And I did not ask who did her wrong
For this was the closed circle of weeping —
the fixed song
That circles between the mother and her young.

וְהֻבָּה מִשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּזְכוּרָה מִדּוֹרוֹת
מִהְיוֹתִי בֵּין קוֹדְמַי –
לְעוֹלָם אֵלֵךְ כָּךְ וְאֵלֵךְ
עַתִּיק וְצָעִיר וּמוֹלִיד.

עֶרֶב סוּפָה

וְעוֹד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מְוָרִיד אֶת חֲזִיתוֹת הַבָּתִּים
בְּאוֹר שֶׁל חִיּוּכֵי יְלָדִים
שֶׁל דִּגְלֵי נֹעַר
שֶׁל כְּרָזוֹת חַג
בְּאוֹר שֶׁל קוֹלוֹת מְעַטִּים
בְּתוֹךְ חַשְׁרַת דְּמָמָה מְעִיקָה
טֶרֶם שׁוּב יַכֶּה הַבָּרָק.

סְגוֹר הַבְּכִי

שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּכִי הַנּוֹלָד בְּחֵיק אִמּוֹ
וּבְשׁוּבִי בְּכִי הָאֵם עַל עוֹלָלָהּ
וְלֹא עָמַדְתִּי לָשֵׂאת דְּבָרִי לֵאמֹר
וְלֹא שָׁאַלְתִּי מִי עוֹלֵל לָהּ
כִּי הָיָה זֶה סְגוֹר הַבְּכִי –
מִזְמוֹר חֹק
הַהוֹלֵךְ־סוֹבֵב בֵּין אֵם וְתִינוֹק.

If They Show Me a Stone and I Say Stone

If they show me a stone and I say stone they will say stone,
And if they show me a tree and I say tree they will say tree.
But if they show me blood and I say blood they will say color.
If they show me blood and I say blood they will say color.

From All Sides Laughter Shall Strike Them

All those who, over the sorrows of strangers, led their spirits to
    dance and to delight
At the sunsets in the day's noon,
They are destined to know no victory. Their laughter from all sides
Shall strike them, echoing the fragments of a battle day's void
Where no victors and no vanquished are.

AND THE WORLD IS DESTROYED.

בָּעֲלֶטֶת

אִם יַרְאוּנִי אֶבֶן וְאֹמַר אֶבֶן יֹאמְרוּ אֶבֶן.
אִם יַרְאוּנִי עֵץ וְאֹמַר עֵץ יֹאמְרוּ עֵץ.
אַךְ אִם יַרְאוּנִי דָּם וְאֹמַר דָּם יֹאמְרוּ צֶבַע.
אִם יַרְאוּנִי דָּם וְאֹמַר דָּם יֹאמְרוּ צֶבַע.

צְחוֹקָם מֵעֲבָרִים יִתְקְפֵם

כָּל שֶׁהִלְּכוּ רוּחָם לִהְיוֹת שְׂמֵחִים וְרוֹקְדִים עַל עִצְּבוֹנוֹת זָרִים
עַל שְׁקִיעוֹת יוֹם בְּצָהֳרָיו
סוֹפָם לֹא יֵדְעוּ נִצָּחוֹן וּצְחוֹקָם מֵעֲבָרִים
יִתְקְפֵם מְהַדְהֵד שִׁבְרֵי יוֹם קְרָב
בּוֹ אֵין מְנַצְּחִים וּמְנֻצָּחִים.

וְעוֹלָם נֶחֱרָב.

Song Yet Song

Happy are those of simple ways who still bless the light
of candles shining in the dark.
Hidden in their palaces, in their magnificent machines,
the others profane
All that is good and shining and make loathsome to the point of scorn
their faith written on the proclamation received from their fathers.
Should anyone walk out into the street he will find the sons who
are legitimate by virtue of their spirit, yet who are illegitimate upon
this earth that so loves them and there are none like who so love her.

Make gleeful, oh earth, your face to them
for there is yet song for them within you.

שִׁיר עוֹד שִׁיר

אַשְׁרֵי תְמִימֵי דֶרֶךְ וְעוֹד יְבָרְכוּ עַל אוֹר נֵרוֹת
מְאִירִים בָּעֲלָטָה.
סְפוּנִים בְּאַרְמוֹנֵיהֶם, בִּמְכוֹנִיּוֹתֵיהֶם הַמְּהֻדָּרוֹת
יְפַגְּלוּ הָאֲחֵרִים
כָּל טוֹב וּמֵאִיר וְיַבְחִילוּ עַד בּוּז אֱמוּנָתָם הַכְּתוּבָה עֲלֵי־כְּרוּז קִבְּלוּ
מֵאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם.
אִם יֵצֵא מִי לָרְחוֹבוֹת וְיִמְצָא אֶת הַבָּנִים הַחֻקִּיִּים–מִכֹּחַ־
רוּחָם וְהֵם בִּלְתִּי־חֻקִּיִּים עַל הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת שֶׁכֹּה אֲהֵבָתַם וְאֵין
כְּמוֹתָם לְאָהֳבָהּ.

הַצְהִילִי, אֶרֶץ, פָּנַיִךְ אֲלֵיהֶם
כִּי עוֹד שִׁיר לָהֶם בָּךְ.

Beyond Imagination

As my imagination rises
To spheres above the earth,
I refine my ear to your word
As to existing reality
Beyond imagination.

From the watchtower of my dreaming, on the shore,
I call to you
As the ship calls dry land
Waving flags of longing

The messages of your love,
Purple waves at the edge of sunrise
For him who wakens at dawn.

Whirlwind

With fiery-lashing
Lightning will traverse the nights of our silence.
Illusion's mass will crumble
In the light of swords on mountain peaks.

מֵעֵבֶר לַדִּמְיוֹן

בְּנָסֹק דִּמְיוֹנִי
אֶל סְפִירוֹת־עַל־אָרֶץ
אֶלְטֹשׁ אָזְנִי אֶל דְּבָרְךָ
כְּאֶל מַמָּשׁוּת קַיֶּמֶת
מֵעֵבֶר לַדִּמְיוֹן.

מִמִּצְפֵּה־חֲלָמַי, בְּחוֹף יָם
אֶקְרָאֵךְ
כִּקְרֹא סְפִינָה לַיַּבֶּשֶׁת
בַּהֲנִיפָה דִּגְלֵי־עֶרְגָּה.

אַשְׁדְּרוֹת־יְדִידוּתֵךְ –
גַּלֵּי־אַרְגָּמָן בְּפַאֲתֵי־זְרִיחָה
לַנֵּעוֹר עִם־שַׁחַר.

סוּפָה

בִּצְלִיפַת־אֵשׁ
יֶחֱצֶה הַבָּרָק לֵיל־דּוּמִיָּתֵנוּ.
חֲשֶׁרַת־אַשְׁלָיוֹת תִּתְפָּרֵק
לְאוֹר־חֲרָבוֹת, בְּרֹאשׁ־הָרִים.

With downpour of morning rain
Wisdom's dream will sprout
Our day's desire charged
By poles of passion in abandoned night.

Hands Full of Sun

Hands full of sun are in spring's longing for you —
Tulips raised early their flame on the hills.
Yellow-petaled daisies,
Clappers of *izdarac** sway in the wind
Within my windows' spacious vista.

In spring's rush to you — the weary yearning of dusk.
From reed stalks, the flutter of ducks
Startled by stars falling into the mirror of your river.
Night moisture. Fragrant essence of rain
In dew drops upon vine twigs.
God spreads gossamer silence over troughs of spices
Before our white-faced dream strengthens
On buds of late almond.

בְּהִנָּתֵךְ גֶּשֶׁם־שַׁחֲרִית
יָנִיב חֲלוֹם־בִּינוֹת
חִשְׁקֵי יוֹמֵנוּ הַמִּתְחַשְׁמֵל
מִקָּטְבֵי־אַהַב, בַּעֲזוּבַת־לֵיל.

מְלֹא־חָפְנַיִם שֶׁמֶשׁ

מְלֹא־חָפְנַיִם שֶׁמֶשׁ בִּכְמִיהַת־אָבִיב אֵלַיִךְ –
צִבְעוֹנִים הִשְׁכִּימוּ לַהֲטָם עֲלֵי גְּבָעוֹת
קַחְוָנִים צְהֻבֵּי־הֶעָלִי
עִנְבְּלֵי־אִזְדֶּרֶכֶת הַנִּשְׁקָלִים בָּרוּחַ
לְרֹחַב־הַתַּצְפִּית שֶׁל חַלּוֹנִי.

בִּנְהִירַת אָבִיב אֵלַיִךְ – עֶרְגָּה לֵאָה שֶׁל עֲרָבַיִם.
רַחַשׁ אַוְזֵי־בָּר מֵעִם קְנֵי־הַסּוּף
מִשְׁתָּאִים לִצְנִיחַת־כּוֹכָבִים אֶל רְאִי־נְהָרֵיִךְ.
טַחַב־לֵיל. רֵיחַ־תַּמְצִית שֶׁל גֶּשֶׁם
בְּאֶגְלֵי־טַל עַל זַלְזַלֵּי־גֶפֶן.
דֹּק־דְּמָמָה פּוֹרֵשׂ אֱלֹהִים עַל רַהֲטֵי־בְּשָׂמִים
טֶרֶם יִתְעַצֵּם חֲלוֹמֵנוּ לְבֶן־הַסֵּבֶר
עַל כַּפְתּוֹרֵי שָׁקֵד אֲפִילִים.

Solar Years

Count the transmutations of solar years
In the folds of dreams on masts
In the branching of olive slips
In seasonal rings on birch trunks
In disintegrating roadstones
In mussel shells masking the sea's retreat from the shore
In layers of rust on struts of the pier
In the dimensions of minerals in the dark ground.

Count the desires
Sailboats that refused to return to anchor.

Open-Eyed Angel

On life and extinction with sea wind changes.
Morning's flood on crags.
Sunset's song beating
On cliffs of night.

When the rolling wave halts, a sunbeam shatters.
A cloud passes in the form of an open-eyed angel.
The moon embalms death's shadow. A blind snake at the house door.

שְׁנוֹת־שֶׁמֶשׁ

מְנֵה עִרְעוּרֵי שְׁנוֹת־שֶׁמֶשׁ
בְּקִפּוּלֵי־חֲלוֹם בַּתְּרָנִים
בִּסְעָפוּת גְּרוֹפִיּוֹת הַזַּיִת
בְּפִצְלוֹת־עוֹנָה עַל גֶּזַע־לִבְנִים
בְּחִסְפּוּסֵי־פֵּרוּק שֶׁל אַבְנֵי־אֹרַח
בִּצְדָפִים הַמַּסְוִים נְסִיגַת־יָם מִן הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת
בְּרִבְדֵי־חֲלֻדָּה עַל אֲלַכְסוֹנֵי־מֵזַח
בְּמֵמַד־הַבְּצָרִים בְּקַרְקַע אֲמוּשָׁה.

מְנֵה אִוַּי־כְּבָר
סִירוֹת־מִפְרָשׂ מֵאֲנוּ חֲזֹר לַמַּעֲגָן.

מַלְאָךְ שְׁתוּם־עֵינָיִם

עֲלֵי חַיִּים וְחִדְלוֹנָם בַּחֲלִיפוֹת רוּחַ־יָם.
גֵּאוּת שַׁחַר עֲלֵי צוּקִים.
שִׁיר דָּכְיָן שֶׁל שְׁקִיעוֹת
בְּשׁוּנִיּוֹת הַלֵּיל.

כִּי יֵעָצֵר גַּל בַּזֶּרֶם – קֶרֶן שֶׁמֶשׁ תִּשְׁתַּבֵּר.
יַחֲלֹף עָנָן בִּדְמוּת־מַלְאָךְ שְׁתוּם־עֵינָיִם.
צַלְמָוֶת יַחֲנֹט סַהַר. נָחָשׁ סוּם לְפֶתַח־בַּיִת.

Until blue prayer is kindled in a sky of longing
As lakes are still in the heatwave before dusk.

Rest, sea, in twilight pause between day and night,
The lament of shores waving a requiem for illusions
Heart's scaffold in its solitude. Disconsolate song,
The whistling of border wind.

Like the ocean floor
Midnight will gather the anguish of daggers
Unsheathed from soul's bitterness at blinding noon.
On beds of quicksand night will thicken
Dream torn and scheming.

Jerusalem

Your stones I shall polish into a mirror
For in them is my yearning,
Pines' loftiness and their hearts' resin.

In dawns' topazes
I shall store
The reflection of your day
Rising early on the city wall

עַד יִדָּלֵק כֹּחַל־תְּפִלָּה בְּשַׁפְרִיר־הָאִוּוּיִים
כְּדוּמִיַּת־אֲגַמִּים בְּשָׁרַב־טְרוֹם־עַרְבַּיִם.

שְׁפֵה, יָם, בְּדִמְדּוּמֵי־הָעֲצֶרֶת בֵּין יוֹם וָלַיִל –
אֶלְיַת־חוֹפִים בְּהִתְאַדּוֹ לְאַשְׁכָּבַת־הָאַשְׁלָיוֹת.
גַּרְדֹּם־לֵבָב בִּבְדִידוּתוֹ. שִׁיר־לֹא־נִחַם
בִּשְׁרֵקַת רוּחַ־סְפָר.

כְּקַרְקָעִית אֹקְיָנוֹס
תֶּאֱסֹף חֲצוֹת יְגוֹן פִּגְיוֹנוֹת
הַנִּשְׁלָפִים מִמְּרִי־נֶפֶשׁ בְּסַנְוֵרֵי־צָהֳרַיִם.
עַל יְצוּעַ־חוֹלוֹת־נָד יַחְשִׁיר לַיִל
פְּרוּם־חֲלוֹמוֹת וְזוֹמֵם.

יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

אֲבָנַיִךְ אֲלַטֵּשׁ עַד אַסְפַּקְלָר
תְּשׁוּקָתִי בָּן
גֵּאוּת־אֳרָנִים וּשְׂרַף־לִבָּם.

בְּגָבִישֵׁי־שַׁחֲרִית
אֶאֱצֹר
בָּבוּאַת יוֹמֵךְ
הַמַּשְׁכִּים עַל חוֹמַת עִיר

Like a stream of light
On a slope of flint
In a bronze mortar sheath.

Your stones I shall polish until my dreams course in you
Like a flow smashing your rocks —
Your yearning, wanderer.

Negev

Again the flutter of desert,
Beat of eagle wings
Among wilderness crags.
Light of noon skies
In primal blindness,
God manifest
On copper mountains
In green rust.

Be uplifted mountains, for vision.
A wayfarer prophesies in the valley.
Yearning will materialize
In the glow of red clay.

כְּשִׁבֹּלֶת־אוֹר
עַל אַשְׁדַּת־שָׁמִיר
בְּנָדָן מַכְתֵּשׁ־אָרֶד.

אֲבָנַיִךְ אֲלַטֵּשׁ עַד יָרוּץ חֲלוֹמִי בָּךְ
כְּיוּבַל עוֹרֵץ טְרָשַׁיִךְ –
תְּשׁוּקָתֵךְ, נַוָּד.

נֶגֶב

וְשׁוּב תְּנוּפַת מִדְבָּר
מַשַּׁק כַּנְפֵי נֶשֶׁר
בֵּין צוּקֵי־צִיָּה.
אוֹר שְׁמֵי־צָהֳרַיִם
בְּסַנְוֵר הִיּוּלִי
הִתְגַּלּוּת־אֱלֹהִים
עַל הָרֵי־נְחֹשֶׁת
בְּיֶרֶק הַחֲלֻדָּה.

הִנָּשְׂאוּ הָרִים, כִּי חָזוֹן.
הֵלֶךְ מִתְנַבֵּא בַּגַּיְא.
יִתְגַּלֵּם הַכֹּסֶף
בִּזְרִיחַת חַרְסִית.

Light will materialize
In flint crystals,
The wanderer's desire
In gleaming isolation.

Sun will pulverize stones,
Road dust like song
In the nomad's longing.

Silence will flame like a lover's expectation
Lonely in its hope.
Wilderness will carry the ardor of his blood
To deposits of sulphur — a gift.

Tremble, earth convulsed in Khamsin.
Your day, appointed, is sand in the fire-core.
In my yearning's burden your thirst is weighed.
Beneath vaults of immortality
Catapult-stones of lust.

יִתְגַּלֵּם הָאוֹר
בְּגְבִישֵׁי־הַצּוּר
תְּשׁוּקַת־נָוָד
בִּבְדִידוּת זְהֻרָה.

שֶׁמֶשׁ אֲבָנִים תָּדֵק.
אֲבַק־דְּרָכִים כְּזֶמֶר
בְּנַעֲגוּעֵי־צֹעַן.

יִלְהַט הַדְּמִי כְּצִפִּיַּת אֹהֵב
עֲרִירִי בְּסִבְרוֹ.
קִנְאַת דָּמוֹ יִשָּׂא מִדְבָּר
אֶל רִבְצֵי־גָפְרִית – דּוֹרוֹן.

גּוּרִי, אֶרֶץ, עֲוִית־חַמְסִין.
יוֹמֵךְ בְּהֻפְקַד חוֹל בַּמּוֹקֵד.
בְּמַשְּׂאוֹי עֶרְגָּתִי יִשָּׁקֵל צִמְאוֹנֵךְ.
תַּחַת קִמְרוֹנֵי־אַלְמָוֶת
בְּלִיסְטְרָאוֹת־חֶמְדָּה.

Zealots of Yearning

For the expectant is the glory,
For the future is theirs.
Who stand against the mountain without recoil
Shall ascend its summit.

So hopes the river, pushing to the sea,
For the freeing of its desires in the roar of ocean.
So hopes the tree, sending a branch toward the sky
To touch the palm of the sun some day.

Therefore we love dawn as certainty of sunrise,
The nightingale's love-song as longings of motherhood,
The bubbling of fountains as beat of dreams becoming real.
Streams pulsing channels for rivers of the future
And not growing weary.
And all who join in the covenant of hope with the universe —
They are the zealots of yearning.

Therefore, forge the future's desires,
As the waves beat out the rocks of the shore,
As the smith forms the white-heated steel to his will.
Form dreams of faithfulness.
The desolation will not vanish from the Negev before it
vanishes from the heart . . .

קַנָּאֵי עֶרְגָּה

לַמְצַפִּים הַתְּהִלָּה,
כִּי לָהֶם הֶעָתִיד.
הָעוֹמְדִים מוּל הָהָר וְאֵינָם נִרְתָּעִים
יַעֲלוּ אֶל פִּסְגָּתוֹ.

כָּךְ קוֹוֶה הַנָּהָר הַחוֹתֵר אֱלֵי יָם
לְפָרְקַן מַאֲוַיָּיו בְּדָכְיֵי־הָאוֹקְיָנוֹס.
כָּךְ מְיַחֵל אִילָן בְּשָׁלְחוֹ פֹּארָה לָרָקִיעַ
כִּי תִּגַּע בָּהּ כַּף־שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּיוֹם מִן הַיָּמִים.

עַל־כֵּן נֹאהַב אֶת הַשַּׁחַר כְּוַדָּאוּת שֶׁל זְרִיחָה.
שִׁירַת־דּוֹדִים שֶׁל זָמִיר כְּכִסּוּפֵי־אִמָּהוּת.
פִּכּוּי־עֲיָנוֹת כִּפְעִימַת חֲלוֹם מִתְמַמֵּשׁ.
פְּלָגִים הַפּוֹלְסִים עֲרוּצִים לְנַהֲרוֹת־הֶעָתִיד
וְלֹא יִלְאוּ.
וְכָל הַבָּאִים בִּבְרִית־תּוֹחֶלֶת עִם הַיְקוּם –
וְהֵם קַנָּאֵי־עֶרְגָּה.

וְעַל־כֵּן חַשְׁלוּ אֶת מַשְׂאַת־הֶעָתִיד,
כַּאֲשֶׁר מְחַשְּׁלִים הַגַּלִּים אֶת סַלְעֵי־הַחוֹף.
וּכְבַרְזֶל מְלֻבָּן אֲשֶׁר הַנַּפָּח יְצוּרוֹ כִּרְצוֹנוֹ
צוּרוּ אֶת חֲלוֹמוֹת־הָאֹמֶן.
לֹא תָּגוֹז הַשַּׁמָּה מִנֶּגֶב בְּטֶרֶם תָּגוֹז מִלְּבָבוֹת...

The Silent Words

(of the woman, the poem, the mother, and death)

I did not cry, my good mother, the song in my hand burst in tears.
I did not kill, my good mother, his blood in my hand I spilled.
His lives carried me to the block, like a blazing star he rose,
For he set his hand to my throat, touched my tongue with a burning coal.

He accompanied me like a shadow, he was to me judge and God,
Within my flesh he was sealed, his paths on my forehead paced,
When weary I fell at his feet, he stopped his ears: not to forgive.
When I remained speechless, alone, my head in his hands he embraced.

He soared in myriad bloomings, in the many hues of the bow.
He wandered with my sleep across heavens high and cold.
With my heart he pounded heavy strokes, in the streets of the noisy town.
He shrieked like white-heated iron at the cruel hammer's blow.

I could not hold his face, his eyes that were touching mine.
His spirit lost in the distance, his days immersed in flame.
When I slept dead on the floor, the lamp before him still shone.
He stirred my life with his hand, the *shamir** upon stone.

And here he lies. Is it you? Or my body here outstretched?
Is the dagger plunged in your chest or my body anguished and pained?

הַדְּבָרִים הַשּׁוֹתְקִים

(על האשה, השיר, האם והמות)

ג

לֹא בָּכִיתִי, אִמִּי הַטּוֹבָה, רַק הַשִּׁיר בְּיָדַי הִתְיַפֵּחַ.
לֹא רָצַחְתִּי, אִמִּי הַטּוֹבָה, רַק שָׁפַכְתִּי דָּמוֹ בְּכַפִּי.
אֶל גַּרְדֹּם נְשָׂאוּנִי חַיָּיו, כִּי עָלָה כְּכוֹכָב מִתְלַקֵּחַ,
כִּי שָׁלַח אֶת יָדוֹ אֶל צַוָּאר, כִּי נָגַע בָּרִצְפָּה בְּמוֹ פִּי.

הוּא לְוָנִי כַּצֵּל, הוּא הָיָה לִי שׁוֹפֵט וֶאֱלֹהַּ,
הוּא נֶחְתַּם בִּבְשָׂרִי, עַל מִצְחִי רִחֲפוּ אָרְחוֹתָיו.
עֵת נָפַלְתִּי עָיֵף לְרַגְלָיו, הוּא אָטַם אֶת אָזְנָיו: לֹא לִסְלֹחַ.
עֵת נוֹתַרְתִּי יָחִיד וְאֵין קוֹל, הוּא חִבֵּק אֶת רֹאשִׁי בְּיָדָיו.

הוּא פָּרַח בְּאַלְפֵי תִּפְרָחוֹת, בַּגְּוָנִים הָרַבִּים שֶׁל הַקֶּשֶׁת.
הוּא נָדַד עִם שְׁנָתִי מוּל שָׁמַיִם גְּבוֹהִים וְקָרִים.
הוּא הָלַם חֲזָקוֹת עִם לִבִּי, בְּחוּצוֹת הַקִּרְיָה הָרוֹעֶשֶׁת.
הוּא נָאַק כְּבַרְזֶל מְלֻבָּן, מוּל מַפַּץ פַּטִּישִׁים אַכְזָרִי.

לֹא יָכֹלְתִּי כַּלְכֵּל אֶת פָּנָיו, אֶת עֵינָיו הַנּוֹגוֹת בְּעֵינַי,
אֶת רוּחוֹ הָאוֹבֵד בַּמֶּרְחָק, אֶת יָמָיו הַטּוֹבְלִים בַּשַּׁלְהֶבֶת.
עֵת נִרְדַּמְתִּי הָרוּג עַל רִצְפָּה, עוֹד דָּלְקָה הַמְּנוֹרָה לְפָנָיו
וְיָדוֹ אֶת חַיַּי דּוֹבְבָה בְּצִפֹּרֶן שָׁמִיר עַל הָאֶבֶן.

וְהִנֵּה הוּא מוּטָל, הַאַתָּה? אוֹ גּוּפִי פֹּה צוֹנֵחַ?
הַפִּגְיוֹן בְּחָזְךָ אוֹ גּוּפִי מְיֻגָּן וְנִכְאָב?

On my face a great stream of water... silence... the moon's crescent
And his head upon my knees and my lips move over his face.

Requiescat

For my dear H.B.D.

Lay wreaths upon the stone. Wreaths
About his amazed, listening face arrange.
He was yours, but you were like strangers:
No ray of light on the cobwebs in the eaves,
He looks at you out of mist, curtains of rain.

To my memory from childhood rises
The picture of his face innocent, aglisten.
Youth blue-heated the iron of his life
Struck by the fire from the pupils of his eyes.
As a man, he came to anguish and cognition.

But what between his walls was mute,
And what outside of them was choked,
To the conflagration of his nights he took.
And with his best friends did not lock
What he carried to his grave and to his book.

זֶרֶם מַיִם אַדִּיר עַל פָּנַי... דּוּמִיָּה... חֶרְמֵשׁוֹ שֶׁל יָרֵחַ...
וְרֹאשׁוֹ עַל בִּרְכַּי, וּשְׂפָתַי מְהַלְּכוֹת עַל פָּנָיו.

נִשְׁמַת

לְיַקִּירִי, ח. ב. ד.

זֵרִים תָּנִיחַ עַל הָאֶבֶן. וְזֵרִים
תַּקִּיף פָּנָיו תְּמוּהֵי הַקֶּשֶׁב.
וְהוּא הָיָה שֶׁלְּךָ, אֲבָל הֱיִיתֶם כְּזָרִים
בְּאֵין קַו אוֹר עַל הַזָּוִית וְהַקּוֹרִים,
וְהוּא צוֹפֶה בְּךָ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֲרָפֶל וּמְסַכֵּי הַגֶּשֶׁם.

מִן הַיַּלְדוּת עוֹלָה תְּמוּנַת פָּנָיו
אֶל זִכְרוֹנִי, תְּמִימָה וּמְהַבְהֶבֶת.
וּבִנְעוּרִים הִכְחִיל בַּרְזֶל חַיָּיו
מֻכֶּה בָּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר פָּרְחָה מֵאִישׁוֹנָיו.
וְגֶבֶר בָּא אֶל הַיָּגוֹן וְהַמַּחֲשֶׁבֶת.

אֲבָל אֶת שֶׁשָּׁתַק בֵּין קִירוֹתָיו,
וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר נֶחֱנַק מֵעֵבֶר — — —
גָּרַר עִמּוֹ אֶל דְּלֵקָתָם שֶׁל לֵילוֹתָיו.
וְלֹא הִסְגִּיר לַטּוֹב בִּידִידָיו
אֶת שֶׁנָּשָׂא עִמּוֹ לַסֵּפֶר, וְלַקֶּבֶר.

This is the book of facts. Like a cruel scroll
His heart and his confessions on my deafness strike.
I beg pardon for the grudge that passes by,
For the error that recurs eternally.
But he just smiled to me from beyond his life.

His Mother

Long ago at the end of Deborah's song
I heard the silence of Sisera's chariots that were late.
I looked at Sisera's mother gazing through the window there,
A woman with a streak of silver in her hair.

Maidens saw "a spoil of varicolored embroidery,
Of varicolored embroidered cloth on the captive's neck."*
He lay as if asleep in the tent then.
His hands were very empty.
Traces of milk, butter and blood on his chin.

The silence lay unbroken by horse or chariot.
The maidens kept silent one by one.
My silence touched their own.
After a while the sun went down,
The setting rays went out.

זֶה סֵפֶר הַדְּבָרִים. כִּמְגִלָּה אַכְזֶרֶת
עַל חֵרְשׁוּתִי מַכִּים לִבּוֹ וּוִדּוּיָיו.
בִּקַּשְׁתִּי שֶׁיִּסְלַח עַל טִינָה עוֹבֶרֶת,
עַל דְּבַר טָעוּת שֶׁלְּעוֹלָם חוֹזֶרֶת.
אַךְ הוּא חִיֵּךְ אֵלַי מֵעֵבֶר לְחַיָּיו.

אִמּוֹ

לִפְנֵי שָׁנִים, בְּסוֹף שִׁירַת דְּבוֹרָה,
שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת דּוּמִיַּת רֶכֶב סִיסְרָא אֲשֶׁר בּוֹשֵׁשׁ לָבוֹא,
מַבִּיט בְּאִמּוֹ שֶׁל סִיסְרָא הַנִּשְׁקֶפֶת בַּחַלּוֹן,
אִשָּׁה שֶׁפַּס כֶּסֶף בִּשְׂעָרָהּ.

שְׁלַל צְבָעִים רִקְמָה,
צֶבַע רִקְמָתַיִם לְצַוְּארֵי שָׁלָל, רָאוּ הַנְּעָרוֹת.
אוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה שָׁכַב בָּאֹהֶל כְּנִרְדָּם.
יָדָיו רֵיקוֹת מְאֹד.
עַל סַנְטֵרוֹ עִקְּבוֹת חָלָב חֶמְאָה וָדָם.

הַדּוּמִיָּה לֹא נִשְׁבְּרָה אֶל הַסּוּסִים וְאֶל הַמֶּרְכָּבוֹת,
גַּם הַנְּעָרוֹת שָׁתְקוּ אַחַת אַחַר אַחַת.
שְׁתִיקָתִי נָגְעָה בִּשְׁתִיקָתָן
אַחַר זְמַן־מָה שָׁקְעָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ.
אַחַר זְמַן־מָה כָּבוּ הַדִּמְדּוּמִים.

For forty years the land was stilled, forty years
Horses did not race. Dead riders did not pierce with glassy eyes.
But she died shortly after her son was killed.

Pictures of the Jews

For Ezra

My quiet prison guards, much tried. My beloved.
Their glance strokes my face till the end.
I am there.
Dungeon. Stones, iron, and twilight.
They do not come to me now by inheritance.

I see them:
Half of them alive and half of them dead,
Free men.
Easy smugglers, of subtle grasp.
Who know by heart the approaches to the sky
And it is there they wander, as if to a familiar country.
And their faces are like the faces of the weary sages.

And they return, in hours of weak-mindedness, to strange earth,
To look about and to meditate.
They return like renters.
After a short time their faces are in blood.

אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה שָׁקְטָה הָאָרֶץ. אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה
לֹא דָהֲרוּ סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים מֵתִים לֹא נָעֲצוּ עֵינֵי זְכוּכִית.
אֲבָל הִיא מֵתָה, זְמַן קָצָר אַחַר מוֹת בְּנָהּ.

תְּמוּנוֹת הַיְּהוּדִים

לעזרא

סוֹהֲרַי הַשְּׁקֵטִים, הַמְנֻסִּים מְאֹד, אוֹהֲבַי.
מַבָּטָם מְלַטֵּף אֶת פָּנַי עַד סוֹף.
אֲנִי שָׁם.
כֶּלֶא. אֲבָנִים, בַּרְזֶל וּבֵין עַרְבַּיִם.
הֵם אֵינָם בָּאִים אֵלַי כָּעֵת בִּירֻשָּׁה.

אֲנִי רוֹאֶה אוֹתָם:
מַחֲצִיתָם חַיִּים וּמֵתִים מַחֲצִיתָם,
בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.
מַבְרִיחִים קַלִּים, דַּקֵּי תְּפִיסָה,
הַיּוֹדְעִים בְּעַל־פֶּה אֶת מְבוֹאוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּלְשָׁם נָעִים כְּמוֹ לְאֶרֶץ מַכָּרָה.
וּפְנֵיהֶם כִּפְנֵי הַחֲכָמִים הָעֲיֵפִים.

וְהֵם שָׁבִים, בִּשְׁעוֹת חֻלְשַׁת־דַּעַת, אֶל אֲדָמָה זָרָה,
לְהָצִיץ וּלְהַרְהֵר.
שָׁבִים כְּמוֹ שׂוֹכְרֵי־דִירָה.
וּלְאַחַר זְמַן מָה פְּנֵיהֶם בַּדָּם.

And they wander, wander and scatter in the wind,
Wind that erases footprints,
Wind that carries the smell of the dead,
Like an agent traveling and weary, black and white,
Who sells wind and trembling.

And his beard grows on the way,
And his house is far away, high up, beyond the silence.

They come to me,
Their footstep close to quiet
And fearful like mortal danger. They come here.
Attack me, achieve a sad victory
And retreat in me silently to the royal city ancient and far.

They come to me, out of the sickness.
From beyond forests and lands and water.
Their faces return from the tear that salted the sea.

Their faces are the smile of the sages,
Above stones and metals and dark pitch
I dream them.

The inhabitants of the city sense them suddenly:
Thieves on ladders to the clouds.

וְהֵם נָעִים, נָעִים וּמִתְפַּזְּרִים בָּרוּחַ,
רוּחַ הַמּוֹחֶקֶת עֲקֵבוֹת,
רוּחַ הַנּוֹשֵׂאת אֶת רֵיחַ הַמֵּתִים.
כְּמוֹ סוֹכֵן נוֹסֵעַ וְעָיֵף, שָׁחוֹר־לָבָן,
הַמּוֹכֵר רוּחַ וָרַעַד,

וּזְקָנוֹ צוֹמֵחַ בַּדֶּרֶךְ,
וּבֵיתוֹ רָחוֹק, לְמַעְלָה, מֵעֵבֶר לַדּוּמִיָּה.

בָּאִים אֵלַי.
צַעֲדָם קָרוֹב לַשֶּׁקֶט
וְחָרֵד כְּמוֹ פִּקּוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ. בָּאִים לְכָאן.
פּוֹשְׁטִים עָלַי, מוֹתִירִים נִצָּחוֹן עָצוּב
וּנְסוֹגִים בִּי חֶרֶשׁ אֶל עִיר מֶלֶךְ עַתִּיקָה וּרְחוֹקָה.

בָּאִים אֵלַי, מִן הַמַּחֲלָה.
מֵעֵבֶר לִיעָרוֹת וַאֲדָמוֹת וּמַיִם
וּפְנֵיהֶם שָׁבוֹת מִן הַדִּמְעָה אֲשֶׁר הִמְלִיחָה אֶת הַיָּם.

וּפְנֵיהֶם חִיּוּךְ הַחֲכָמִים.
מֵעַל לַאֲבָנִים וּמַתָּכוֹת וָזֶפֶת אֲפֵלָה.
אֲנִי חוֹלֵם אוֹתָם.

אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר חָשִׁים בָּהֶם פִּתְאֹם:
גַּנָּב עַל סֻלָּמוֹת לַעֲנָנִים.

When they shoot at them,
Half their outcry falls with them.
Half rises to the skies, accustomed to them,
To be received,
To become the song of the angels.

And tonight they return to attack me with prolonged attacks,
Footprints in blood.

I do not move now.
I continue, as if enchanted, their movements,
And they go on and are murdered within me like father.
And they are alone.
And only God is with them.

Odysseus

And when he returned to his birthplace he found sea
And various fishes and grass floating on slow waves
And sun weakened in the rims of the sky.

An error forever recurs, said Odysseus in his tired heart,
And returned to the cross-roads close to the neighboring city
To find the road to his birthplace that was not water.

כְּשֶׁיּוֹרִים בָּהֶם,
מַחֲצִית צַעֲקָתָם נוֹפֶלֶת עִמָּהֶם.
מַחֲצִית עוֹלָה אֶל הַשָּׁמַיִם, הָרְגִילִים לָהֶם,
לְהִתְקַבֵּל,
לִהְיוֹת שִׁירַת הַמַּלְאָכִים.

וְהַלַּיְלָה, שָׁבִים לִתְקֹף אוֹתִי בְּהַתְקָפוֹת מְמֻשָּׁכוֹת,
עֲקֵבוֹת מִדָּם.

אֵינֶנִּי נָע כָּעֵת.
אֲנִי מַמְשִׁיךְ כְּמוֹ מְכֻשָּׁף אֶת תְּנוּעָתָם
וְהֵם הוֹלְכִים וְנִרְצָחִים בִּי כְּמוֹ אָב,
וְהֵם לְבַדָּם.
וְרַק אֱלֹהִים עִמָּהֶם.

אוֹדִיסֵס

וּבְשׁוּבוֹ אֶל עִיר מוֹלַדְתּוֹ מָצָא יָם
וְדָגִים שׁוֹנִים וְעֵשֶׂב צָף עַל הַגַּלִּים אִטִּיִּים
וְשֶׁמֶשׁ נֶחֱלֶשֶׁת בְּשׁוּלֵי שָׁמַיִם.

טָעוּת לְעוֹלָם חוֹזֶרֶת, אָמַר אוֹדִיסֵס בְּלִבּוֹ הֶעָיֵף
וְחָזַר עַד פָּרָשַׁת־הַדְּרָכִים הַסְּמוּכָה לָעִיר הַשְּׁכֵנָה,
לִמְצֹא אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ אֶל עִיר מוֹלַדְתּוֹ שֶׁלֹּא הָיְתָה מַיִם.

A wayfarer weary as a dreamer yearning much
Between people who spoke another Greek.
The words he had taken as provision for his travels had meanwhile perished.

For a moment he thought he had slumbered many days
And had returned to people who were not amazed to see him
And did not open their eyes wide.

He questioned them with motions and they tried to understand him
From a distance.
The scarlet turned violet and faded in the rims of those skies.

The adults arose and took the children standing about him in a circle
And drew them away.
And light after light yellowed in house after house.

The dew came and fell upon his head.
The wind came and kissed his lips.
Water came and washed his feet like old Eurycleia.*
And it did not see the scar and continued down the slope like water.

הָלַךְ עָיֵף כְּחוֹלֵם וּמִתְגַּעְגֵּעַ מְאֹד
בֵּין אֲנָשִׁים שֶׁדִּבְּרוּ יְוָנִית אַחֶרֶת.
הַמִּלִּים שֶׁנָּטַל עִמּוֹ כְּצֵידָה לְדֶרֶךְ הַמַּסָּעוֹת, גָּוְעוּ בֵּינְתַיִם.

רֶגַע חָשַׁב כִּי נִרְדַּם לְיָמִים רַבִּים
וְחָזַר אֶל אֲנָשִׁים שֶׁלֹּא תָּמְהוּ בִּרְאוֹתָם אוֹתוֹ
וְלֹא קָרְעוּ עֵינַיִם.

הוּא שָׁאַל אוֹתָם בִּתְנוּעוֹת וְהֵם נִסּוּ לְהָבִין אוֹתוֹ
מִתּוֹךְ הַמֶּרְחַקִּים.
הָאַרְגָּמָן הִסְגִּיל וְהָלַךְ בְּשׁוּלֵי אוֹתָם שָׁמַיִם.

קָמוּ הַמְּבֻגָּרִים וְנָטְלוּ אֶת הַיְלָדִים שֶׁעָמְדוּ סְבִיבוֹ בְּמַעְגָּל
וּמָשְׁכוּ אוֹתָם.
וְאוֹר אַחַר אוֹר הִצְהִיב בְּבַיִת אַחַר בַּיִת.

בָּא טַל וְיָרַד עַל רֹאשׁוֹ.
בָּאָה רוּחַ וְנָשְׁקָה לִשְׂפָתָיו.
בָּאוּ מַיִם וְשָׁטְפוּ רַגְלָיו כְּאֶבְרִיקְלֵיָה הַזְּקֵנָה.
וְלֹא רָאוּ אֶת הַצַּלֶּקֶת וְהִמְשִׁיכוּ בַּמּוֹרָד כְּדֶרֶךְ הַמַּיִם.

Piyyut for Rosh Hashana*

for Aharon Meyerovitz

For this is not the road against which stand enemy lines, or foreign languages
Or muteness.
Neither I nor my voice is tied by the conditions set on these distances.
I walk and I am not murdered.
I come at last to the house. I stop. I knock at the door.

All men who forgive say. What has been has been. I repeat.
All women who forgive stand on the porches sooner or later.
There is a window which is not black. There is a letter which is not
lost on the way.
And if it did not arrive yesterday it will certainly arrive tomorrow.

All the cities are open tonight. None is besieged or embalmed.
Guests will arrive tonight and I am one of them.
In all the windows branches of regret are opening one after the other.
Many words come up in pilgrimage from lands of silence and death.

The curtains billow and the doors move on their hinges.

פִּיּוּט לְרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

לאהרן מאירוביץ

הֲלֹא אֵין זוֹ דֶּרֶךְ שֶׁנִּצָּבִים לָהּ קַוֵּי הָאוֹיְבִים אוֹ הַשָּׂפוֹת הַזָּרוֹת
אוֹ הָאֵלֶם.
לֹא אֲנִי וְלֹא קוֹלִי אֵינֵנּוּ קְשׁוּרִים בְּהַסְכָּמַת הַמֶּרְחַקִּים הָאֵלֶּה.
אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינֶנִּי נִרְצָח.
אֲנִי בָּא לְבָסוֹף אֶל בַּיִת. אֲנִי נֶעֱצָר. אֲנִי דוֹפֵק בַּדֶּלֶת.

כָּל הַסּוֹלְחִים אוֹמְרִים, מַה שֶּׁהָיָה הָיָה. אֲנִי שָׁב וְחוֹזֵר.
כָּל הַסּוֹלְחוֹת נִצָּבוֹת עַל מִרְפָּסוֹת בְּמֻקְדָּם אוֹ בִּמְאֻחָר.
יֵשׁ חַלּוֹן שֶׁאֵינֶנּוּ שָׁחוֹר. יֵשׁ אִגֶּרֶת שֶׁאֵינֶנָּה אוֹבֶדֶת בַּדֶּרֶךְ.
וְאִם לֹא הִגִּיעָה אֶתְמוֹל וַדַּאי תַּגִּיעַ מָחָר.

כָּל הֶעָרִים פְּתוּחוֹת הַלַּיְלָה. אֵין נְצוּרָה וְאֵין חֲנוּטָה.
אוֹרְחִים יָבוֹאוּ הַלַּיְלָה וַאֲנִי אֶחָד מֵהֶם.
בְּכָל הַחַלּוֹנוֹת הוֹלְכִים וְנִפְתָּחִים אֶחָד אַחַר אֶחָד סְנִיפֵי הַחֲרָטָה.
מִלִּים רַבּוֹת עוֹלוֹת לְרֶגֶל מֵאַרְצוֹת דּוּמָה וְצַלְמוֹתָהּ.

הַוִּילוֹנוֹת פּוֹרְחִים וְהַדְּלָתוֹת נָעוֹת עַל צִירֵיהֶן.

Here We Loved

(from the sonnet sequence)

I

My father was four years at their war
And did not hate or love his enemies.
But I know that he, already there,
Formed me daily out of his tranquillities,

They were so very few that he could pick
Between the bombs and smoke
And put them in his tattered sack
With the remains of mother's hardening cake.

Nameless dead he gathered in his eyes,
Numerous dead he gathered for me so
That I might love them, in his glances recognized,

And not die like them by terror taken...
He filled his eyes with them, he was mistaken:
To all my battles I must go.

אָהַבְנוּ כָּאן

(מתוך מחזור סונטות)

א

אָבִי הָיָה אַרְבַּע שָׁנִים בְּמִלְחַמְתָּם,
וְלֹא שָׂנֵא אוֹיְבָיו וְלֹא אָהַב.
אֲבָל אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ, כִּי כְּבָר שָׁם
בָּנָה אוֹתִי יוֹם־יוֹם מִשַּׁלְווֹתָיו.

הַמְּעָטוֹת כָּל־כָּךְ, אֲשֶׁר לָקַט
אוֹתָן בֵּין פְּצָצוֹת וּבֵין עָשָׁן,
וְשָׂם אוֹתָן בְּתַרְמִילוֹ הַמְּמֻרְטָט
עִם שְׁאֵרִית עוּגַת־אִמּוֹ הַמִּתְקַשָּׁה.

וּבְעֵינָיו אָסַף מֵתִים בְּלִי שֵׁם,
מֵתִים רַבִּים אָסַף לְמַעֲנִי,
שֶׁאַכִּירֵם בְּמַבָּטָיו וְאוֹהֲבֵם

וְלֹא אָמוּת כְּמוֹהֶם בַּזְּוָעָה...
הוּא מִלֵּא עֵינָיו בָּהֶם וְהוּא טָעָה:
אֶל כָּל מִלְחֲמוֹתַי יוֹצֵא אֲנִי.

On My Birthday

Thirty-two times I went forth to my life
Each time it pained my mother less,
Pained others less,
And me more.

Thirty-two times I put on the world
And still it does not fit me.
It burdens me,
Unlike my overcoat whose shape is now
The shape of my body, comfortable
And growing worn.

Thirty-two times I went over the account
Without finding the error.
I began the story
And was not allowed to finish it.

Thirty-two years I carry with me my father's qualities
And most of them I dropped by the roadside
To ease the burden for myself.
Grass in my mouth. I wonder,
And the beam I am unable to remove from my eyes
Begins to flower with the trees in springtime.

לְיוֹם הֻלַּדְתִּי

שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם פַּעַם יָצָאתִי אֶל חַיַּי
וּבְכָל פַּעַם מַכְאִיב פָּחוֹת לְאִמִּי,
פָּחוֹת לַאֲחֵרִים,
יוֹתֵר לְעַצְמִי.

שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם פַּעַם אֲנִי לוֹבֵשׁ אֶת הָעוֹלָם
וְטֶרֶם הָתְאַם לִי.
הוּא מֵעִיק עָלַי,
שֶׁלֹּא כַּמְּעִיל, שֶׁצּוּרָתוֹ עַכְשָׁו צוּרַת גּוּפִי
וְהוּא נוֹחַ
וְיִתְבַּלֶּה.

שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם פַּעַם עָבַרְתִּי עַל הַחֶשְׁבּוֹן
בְּלִי לִמְצֹא אֶת הַטָּעוּת,
הִתְחַלְתִּי אֶת הַסִּפּוּר
וְלֹא נָתְנוּ לִי לְסַיְּמוֹ.

שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה אֲנִי נוֹשֵׂא עִמִּי תְּכוּנוֹת אָבִי
וְאֶת רֻבָּן הִשַּׁרְתִּי לְאֹרֶךְ הַדֶּרֶךְ,
כְּדֵי לְהָקֵל מֵעָלַי אֶת הַמַּשָּׂא.
וּבְפִי עֲשָׂבִים. וַאֲנִי תּוֹהֶה,
וְהַקּוֹרָה בֵּין עֵינַי, שֶׁלֹּא אוּכַל אוֹתָהּ, לָטוּל,
הֵחֵלָּה לִפְרֹחַ בָּאֲבִיבִים עִם אִילָנוֹת.

My deeds grow fewer,
Progressively fewer,
But commentaries about them have increased:
Just as the Talmud* grows difficult
Concentrated on a page,
And Rashi* and the Tosaphists*
Enclose it on every side.

And now for the thirty-second time,
After the thirty-second year,
I am still a parable
With no chance of a moral.
I stand without camouflage before enemy eyes,
With obsolete maps in my hands,
With growing opposition and amidst towers,
Alone without recommendations
In the great wilderness.

Leaves Without Trees

Leaves without trees
Must wander.
Blood without a body
Will not return to the basic elements,

וּמַעֲשַׂי מִתְמַעֲטִים
הָלֹךְ וְהִתְמַעֵט. אֲבָל
הַפֵּרוּשִׁים גָּדְלוּ סְבִיבָם, כְּמוֹ,
כְּשֶׁהַתַּלְמוּד נַעֲשֶׂה קָשֶׁה
וּמִצְטַמְצֵם בַּדַּף,
וְרַשִׁי וְתוֹסָפוֹת
סוֹגְרִים עָלָיו מִכָּל צַד.

וְעַכְשָׁו, אַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם פַּעַם,
אַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה,
אֲנִי עֲדַיִן מָשָׁל,
בְּלִי סִכּוּיִים לִהְיוֹת נִמְשָׁל.
וְעוֹמֵד בְּלִי הַסְוָאָה מוּל עֵינֵי אוֹיֵב
וּמַפּוֹת מְיֻשָּׁנוֹת בְּיָדַי
בַּהִתְנַגְּדוּת הַגּוֹבֶרֶת וּבֵין מִגְדָּלִים,
וּלְבַדִּי, בְּלִי הַמְלָצוֹת
בַּמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל.

עָלִים בְּלִי אִילָנוֹת

עָלִים בלִי אִילָנוֹת
צְרִיכִים לִנְדּוֹד.
דָּם בְּלִי גּוּף,
לֹא יָשׁוּב לַגּוּפִים,

It will dry on every road.
And all words must be weaned
From the mouths
To find new ones.
The earth must be cured
Of history
And the stones need to sleep
Even that one*
That which killed Goliath must sleep, dark.

But I
Like a garage
Turned into a synagogue,
And again abandoned.

And I
Like the surveyors
Must drive sharpened hopes
With black and white sticks
Far into the desolate plain
Before me.

יִבַשׁ בְּכָל דֶּרֶךְ,
וְכָל הַמִּלִּים צְרִיכוֹת לְהִגָּמֵל,
מִן הַפִּיּוֹת
וְלִמְצוֹא לָהֶן חֲדָשִׁים.
וּלְהַחְלִים צְרִיכָה הָאֲדָמָה
מִדִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים.
וְלִישׁוֹן צְרִיכוֹת הָאֲבָנִים
וְגַם זוֹ,
שֶׁהָרְגָה אֶת גָּלְיַת, תִּישַׁן שְׁחוֹרָה.

אֲבָל אֲנִי
כְּמוּסָךְ,
שֶׁהָפְכוּ אוֹתוֹ לְבֵית־כְּנֶסֶת,
עַכְשָׁו שׁוּב נָטוּשׁ.

אֲבָל אֲנִי,
כַּמּוֹדְדִים,
צָרִיךְ לִתְקוֹעַ תִּקְווֹת מְחֻדָּדוֹת,
בְּמַקְלוֹת – שְׁחוֹר־לָבָן,
הַרְחֵק אֶל תּוֹךְ הַמִּישׁוֹר הַשּׁוֹמֵם
אֲשֶׁר לְפָנַי.

The Green Refrain

Rain comes and goes
The earth
Licks up abundant dew drops. Green refrain
Gushes from her throat: tree foliage, grain,
Bushes, wild grass. By the law

Of cycle following cycle, after many cycles.
And again returns the yellow summer,
Returns and rests, like locust swarm
Upon the dust.
Endless dance,

Eternal saraband.
Breakers, indifferent smash
On cliffs of existence barnacled with charm.
And profusion of sandsilt ranges stratified
Forms mounds, forms mountains.
Indeed,

Our most solid thoughts will not escape
The stalest conclusion rooted in
Our spastic lives. Our captive lives.
Sing your song, sing your song, bird in the net.

פִּזְמוֹן יָרֹק

גֶּשֶׁם בָּא וְהוֹלֵךְ.
הָאֲדָמָה
לוֹחֶכֶת אֶת הָרִי. פִּזְמוֹן יָרֹק
גָּח מִגְּרוֹנָהּ: עַלְוַת־אִילָן, קָמָה,
שִׂיחִים וְעֵשֶׂב־בָּר. כְּחֹק

דּוֹר אַחַר דּוֹר אַחַר דּוֹרוֹת הַרְבֵּה.
וְשׁוּב חוֹזֵר הַקַּיִץ הַצָּהֹב,
חוֹזֵר וָנָח, כְּלַהֲקַת־אַרְבֶּה
עַל הֶעָפָר.
רִקּוּד שֶׁאֵין לוֹ סוֹף.

מָחוֹל נִצְחִי.
מִשְׁבַּר־הַסְּתָם חוֹבֵט
אֶת שׁוּנִיּוֹת־הַיֵּשׁ הַמְצֻדָּפוֹת בְּחֵן,
וְשֶׁפַע חוֹל־הַסַּחַף מִתְרַבֵּד
וְצָר גְּבָעוֹת וְצָר הָרִים.
אָכֵן,

לֹא יִמָּלְטוּ כָּל הֲגִיגֵינוּ הַשְּׁפוּיִים
מִמַּסְקָנַת הַתֶּפֶל הַמְּשֹׁרֶשֶׁת
בְּתוֹךְ עֲוִית חַיֵּינוּ. הַשְּׁבוּיִים.
שִׁירִי שִׁירֵךְ, שִׁירִי שִׁירֵךְ, צִפּוֹר בָּרֶשֶׁת!

The Command

for Shimon Halkin with esteem

Neither the paths determine, nor the goal.
The command of our being (which may strike
Among myriads of possibilities) alone creates —
Alone is able to create — the lesion

On the body of the habitual, which daily forces
The morrow into a mold, known
Beyond escape,
A scar which making pulse
With sharpness of unaccustomed pain, until spasm

Both chambers of the heart.
And then — Perhaps! —
The song may gush. Who then can ordain:
"This path of mine example is; my footsteps
Follow!" (or also: "Don't!?").
Far

From each known certainty the command forms
This riddle of the blessed or barren womb.
Why ever solve it disappointingly?
The paths do not determine, nor the goal.

הַצַּו

לש. הלקין בהוקרה

לֹא הַדְּרָכִים קוֹבְעוֹת וְלֹא הַמַּטָּרָה.
צַו הֲוָיָתֵנוּ (זוֹ הַמִּתְחַבֶּטֶת
בֵּין רְבָבוֹת אֶפְשָׁרֻיּוֹת) רַק הוּא יִבְרָא –
רַק הוּא יוּכַל לִבְרֹא! – אֶת הַשָּׂרֶטֶת

בְּגוּף הַהֶרְגֵּלִים הָאֵלֶּה הַכּוֹפִים
יוֹם יוֹם אֶת הַמָּחָר אֶל דְּפוּס יָדוּעַ
עַד אֵין מוֹצָא.
שָׂרֶטֶת שֶׁתַּפְעִים,
בְּחַדֻּיּוֹת כְּאֵב־הַלֹּא־מֻרְגָּל, עֲדֵי קִרְטוּעַ,

אֶת שְׁנֵי חַדְרֵי הַלֵּב.
וְאָז־אוּלַי! –
יְקַלַּח הַשִּׁיר. וּמִי יוּכַל לִפְסֹק:
"שְׁבִילִי שֶׁלִּי מוֹפֵת. בְּשָׁעֳלַי
לֵךְ!" (אוֹ גַּם: "אַל תֵּלֵךְ!?").
רָחוֹק

מִכָּל וַדַּאי מוּדָע נִרְקַם הַצַּו.
וְזוֹ חִידַת בְּרוּכַת־הָרֶחֶם וְהָעֲקָרָה
מַה לָּנוּ לְפָתְרָהּ פִּתְרוֹן אַכְזָב?
לֹא הַדְּרָכִים קוֹבְעוֹת וְלֹא הַמַּטָּרָה.

Canaan

Canaan, oh Canaan!
In Shechem, in Bethlehem
The olives murmured.
But here, my God,
The great cities storm,
Here the serpents nest.
Seven highways go up to Rome
And seven roads to the heart
But one and only one the pathway home.
Be it tranquil or storm.

Therefore, when foxes wail to every wind
We too go up to the mountain top.
Release countless circles of smoke
And opposite Beersheba's road — we watch.

Of Those Who Go, Not to Return

Not the dead today shall praise you, God!*
The pierced shall drip one by one.
And even if it is the same for us — thus, or so —
They are the ones who go and shall not return.

כְּנַעַן

כְּנַעַן, הוֹ כְּנַעַן!
בִּשְׁכֶם, בְּבֵית־לֶחֶם,
הָיוּ הַזֵּיתִים רוֹחֲשִׁים.
אַךְ כָּאן, אֱלֹהַי,
כָּאן כְּרַכִּים סוֹעֲרִים,
כָּאן קִנֵּי נְחָשִׁים.
שִׁבְעִים דַּרְכֵי־מֶלֶךְ עוֹלוֹת לָעִיר רוֹמָא
וְשֶׁבַע דְּרָכִים יֵשׁ לַלֵּב.
אַךְ חַד הוּא, רַק חַד הוּא הָאֹרַח הַבַּיְתָה.
יְהִי נָא סוֹעֵר, יְהִי נָא שָׁלֵו!

עַל כֵּן בְּיַלֵּל שׁוּעָלִים לְכָל רוּחַ –
אַף אָנוּ עוֹלִים לְרֹאשׁ גֶּבַע,
פּוֹלְטִים טַבָּעוֹת־שֶׁל־עָשָׁן לְאֵין סְפוֹר
וְצוֹפִים – לְמוּל דֶּרֶךְ בְּאֵר־שֶׁבַע.

עַל הַהוֹלְכִים שֶׁלֹּא יָשׁוּבוּ

לֹא הַמֵּתִים הַיּוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ, יָהּ!
אֶחָד־אֶחָד מְדֻקָּרִים יָזוּבוּ.
וְאַף כִּי הַיְנוּ־הַךְ הוּא לָנוּ – כָּךְ, אוֹ כָּךְ –
הֵן הֵמָּה הַהוֹלְכִים שֶׁלֹּא יָשׁוּבוּ.

Their name is covered now by darkness, Lord, my God!
They did not arrive, but one by one they went.
To his dust the murdered boy returned,
By a forest of roots his mouth was rent.

Also, our memory is poor. We shall not see far.
All who have gone — a whisper shall not bring them back.
What more, what more shall we do that we have not done to you?
What more, our brother, by deceit trapped?

For not forever shall your girl there weep many tears
And not forever shall she look down.
In the village where you were born the bells hum
As if you had not come and had not gone.

And man's soul? Does it live forever?
Who shall tell us so, in kindness or angry pain?
Better the live dog than the dead lion,*
For life will not be given us again.

שְׁמָם יְכֻסֶּה עַתָּה בַּחֹשֶׁךְ, יָהּ־אֵלִי!
אֶחָד־אֶחָד הָלְכוּ וְלֹא הִגִּיעוּ.
חָזַר לַעֲפָרוֹ הַנַּעַר הֶהָרוּג
וְיַעַר שָׁרָשִׁים נָחַר אֶל פִּיהוּ.

אַף זִכְרוֹנֵנוּ דַּל. וְלֹא נַרְחִיק רְאוֹת.
כָּל מִי אֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ – לֹא יַחֲזִירֶנּוּ לַחַשׁ.
מָה עוֹד, מַה נְּעוֹלֵל – וְלֹא עוֹלַלְנוּ לָךְ?
מָה עוֹד, אָחִינוּ, נִסְבַּךְ בְּכַחַשׁ?

כִּי לֹא לָעַד שָׁם תֵּבְךְּ נַעֲרָתְךָ, רַב בְּכִי
וְלֹא לָעַד תַּשְׁפֵּל עֵינֶיהָ מַטָּה.
בִּכְפַר מוֹלַדְתְּךָ, – הוֹמִים פַּעֲמוֹנִים
כְּאִלּוּ לֹא הָלַכְתָּ, אַף לֹא בָּאתָ.

וְנֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם? הַהִיא הוֹיָה לָעַד?
מִי יַגִּידֶנּוּ כֵּן, לְחֶסֶד אוֹ לְזַעַם?
כֹּה טוֹב לְכֶלֶב חַי מִן הָאֲרִי הַמֵּת,
כִּי הַחַיִּים לֹא יִנָּתְנוּ עוֹד פַּעַם.

The Fire in the Stone

Y.L.

Also in sleep I see you, comprehend,
And my fear streams to the joy
As I myself stream to your hand.

As the rainbow leans on the cloud,
The wind on the trunk of the tree,
The head upon the shoulder, you lean on me.

In your heart, returned as in the ark,
I crossed alive the water's terrored dark.

Shaken free of all, endless, you dwell in me alone
As I dwell in my bones.

As within stone the fire rests,
As within nothingness being nests.

In me your voice speaks, love wrought.
We have become one in thought.

הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּאֶבֶן

י. ל.

גַּם בַּשֵּׁנָה אֲנִי רוֹאֶה אוֹתְךָ
וּפַחֲדִי זוֹרֵם אֶל הַשִּׂמְחָה
כָּמוֹנִי הַזּוֹרֵם אֶל תּוֹךְ יָדְךָ.

כְּהִשָּׁעֵן הַקֶּשֶׁת עַל עָנָן,
הָרוּחַ עַל גּוּפוֹ שֶׁל הָאִילָן,
רֹאשׁ עַל כָּתֵף, אַתָּה עָלַי נִשְׁעָן.

וּבְלִבְּךָ יָשׁוּב כְּמוֹ בַּתֵּבָה
עָבַרְתִּי חַי אֶת מֵי הַזְּוָעָה.

נָעוּר מִכֹּל – תָּגוּר בִּי עַד־אֵין־דַּי
כְּמוֹ אֲנִי אָגוּר בְּעַצְמוֹתַי.

כְּמוֹ בָּאֶבֶן תִּתְגּוֹרֵר הָאֵשׁ.
כְּמוֹ בָּאַיִן מְקַנֵּן הַיֵּשׁ

קוֹלְךָ בִּי מְדַבֵּר בְּאַהֲבָה.
הָיִינוּ לְאֶחָד בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה.

Lullaby

The nocturnal, my panther, has eyes that spark,
His teeth flash in the dark, in dark,
His claw is sharp as the razor blade,
Sleep, my child, in the forest glade!

If you sleep and nap, my God's pity prevails,
And you shall not see mother draw in a pail
The blue eyes of the light
To water the creator of night.

Close your eyelids, sleep as you are,
In the sky hangs a merciful star,
On mother's forehead a star again,
My panther is lurking in vain
At night, at night in the forest glade,
In dream at your throat like a razor blade.

The Wicked Clamor

The wicked clamor, my ear grows deaf.
They sit six days in my soul,
When shall the Sabbath free my captivity

שִׁיר עֶרֶשׂ

הַלֵּילִי, נְמֵרִי, לוֹ עֵינַיִם דּוֹלְקוֹת,
בַּחשֶׁךְ בַּחשֶׁךְ שִׁנָּיו בּוֹרְקוֹת,
צִפָּרְנוֹ חַדָּה־לוֹ כַּתַּעַר,
נוּמָה, יַלְדִּי, בַּיַּעַר!

אִם תִּישַׁן, אִם תָּנוּם, יְרַחֵם אֵלִי,
לֹא תִרְאֶה אֶת אִמְּךָ שׁוֹאֶבֶת בִּדְלִי
אֶת עֵינֵי־הָאוֹרָה הַתְּכֻלּוֹת
לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת בּוֹרֵא־הַלֵּילוֹת.

סְגֹר עַפְעַפֶּיךָ וְנוּם,
בַּשָּׁמַיִם כּוֹכָב רַחוּם,
עַל מֵצַח־אִמְּךָ כּוֹכָב.
נְמֵרִי אוֹרֵב לַשָּׁוְא
בַּחשֶׁךְ בַּחשֶׁךְ, בַּיַּעַר,
בַּחֲלוֹם עַל גְּרוֹנְךָ כְּמוֹ תַּעַר.

הָרְשָׁעִים רוֹעֲשִׁים

הָרְשָׁעִים רוֹעֲשִׁים, אָזְנִי חֵרְשָׁה,
הֵם יוֹשְׁבִים בְּנַפְשִׁי יָמִים שִׁשָּׁה,
מָתַי תָּשִׁיב שַׁבָּת שְׁבוּתִי

And I provide again for my household,
Break with hands the whole
Daily bread of mercy, crusted gold?
And in silence also hear water's sound,
And my despair not bark again?
I shall be able to touch you then!

Sunflower

Fiery wheel without beginning,
Fiery wheel without an end.
The revolving sword of flame.
In dance the wings of cherubim
About an eye dark and flickering
About a heart dark and dumb.

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה־שׁוּב לְבֵיתִי
וּבְיָדַי אֶבְצַע, תָּמִים,
אֶת לֶחֶם־חֹק־הָרַחֲמִים
זְהוֹב־הַגּוּף? וְגַם אֶשְׁמַע
אֶת קוֹל־הַמַּיִם בַּדְּמָמָה
וְיֵאוּשִׁי לֹא עוֹד יְנַבַּח
וְשׁוּב אוּכַל לָגַעַת בָּךְ!

חַמָּנִית

גַּלְגַּל הָאוֹר לְלֹא רֵאשִׁית,
גַּלְגַּל הָאוֹר לְלֹא אַחֲרִית,
חֶרֶב הָאֵשׁ הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת,
כַּנְפֵי כְּרוּבִים בִּמְחוֹלָם
סְבִיב עַיִן אֲפֵלָה, דּוֹעֶכֶת,
סְבִיב לֵב אָפֵל וְנֶאֱלָם.

Sun

A thousand years I was sick with darkness,
And my veins whispered darkness instead of blood.
The sun rose and set — I did not see it.
For I was very sick with darkness,
The night shut its gates around me.
Then I was as one who walks on clouds and, behold, they are not clouds
but thoughts —
Then whipped I crouched to shout lightning, to weep rainstorms.

But no wind came to me.
Only death gnawed at my throat,
And my heart, paralyzed and impotent, would not bear me life and blood.

Nightmare frightened me to escape myself,
I fled from earth's end to the ends of earth.
My feet shouted distances — distances,
Deceived into believing that in distances is the end of all darkness,
That everything there is radiant!
And, behold, there, knives of darkness sparkled against me,
night's gates were high.
My feet fell away from me, terrible terrible stumbling.
My soul saddened to know the sun outside weeps toward my flesh,
The sun outside weeps toward my eyes — the weeping of awful light.

שֶׁמֶשׁ

אֶלֶף שָׁנָה חָלִיתִי חשֶׁךְ
וְעוֹרְקַי לָחֲשׁוּ חשֶׁךְ תַּחַת דָּם.
וְהַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יָצְאָה וּבָאָה – וַאֲנִי לֹא רְאִיתִיהָ.
כִּי חָלִיתִי חשֶׁךְ מְאֹד,
וְלַיְלָה סָגַר עָלַי שְׁעָרִים.
אָז הָיִיתִי כְּמִתְהַלֵּךְ עַל עֲנָנִים, וְהִנֵּה לֹא עֲנָנִים, כִּי
מַחֲשָׁבוֹת –
אָז שַׁחוֹתִי צָלוּף – לִצְעֹק בָּרָק, אוֹ לִבְכּוֹת סוּפוֹת
הַגְּשָׁמִים.

וְרוּחַ לֹא בָּאָה אֵלַי.
רַק הַמָּוֶת כִּרְסֵם גְּרוֹנִי,
וְהִנֵּה לִבִּי שָׁתוּק וְעָקָר לֹא יוֹלִיד לִי חַיִּים וָדָם.

וְהַבַּלָּהָה אֲחָזַתְנִי לִבְרֹחַ מִפָּנַי,
וָאָנוּס מִיַּרְכְּתֵי תֵּבֵל עַד יַרְכָּתֶיהָ.
וְרַגְלַי צוֹעֲקוֹת מֶרְחַקִּים־מֶרְחַקִּים,
כַּאֲשֶׁר נִפְתּוּת הָיוּ לְהַאֲמִין כִּי בַּמֶּרְחַקִּים קֵץ כָּל חשֶׁךְ,
שֶׁכָּל אֲשֶׁר שָׁם – הוּא הַמֵּאִיר!
וְהִנֵּה סָבִיב נוֹצְצוֹת עָלַי סַכִּינֵי הַחשֶׁךְ, וְשַׁעֲרֵי הַלַּיְלָה
גְּבוֹהִים.
וְרַגְלַי נָפְלוּ מִמֶּנִּי. אֲיֻמּוֹת־אֲיֻמּוֹת־כִּשָּׁלוֹן.
וְנַפְשִׁי עָצְבָה לָדַעַת, כִּי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בַּחוּץ בּוֹכָה אֶל בְּשָׂרִי,
כִּי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בַּחוּץ בּוֹכָה אֶל עֵינַי – בְּכִי־נוֹרָא־אוֹר.

And, alas, I am cast dark within myself
And deep are the anguishes of darkness in my chambers.
In the darkness I despaired of morning and I said it would not come.
    Morning will not come within me for it paces, paces outside,
And I am cast — And I am dark within myself.

But suddenly I shouted
    Sun!
    For you I shall be morning!
At once I was utterly shattered, from within the soul's rose blossomed in me.
    Or a woman's hand touched my soul,
    Or a bird sang above its chords.
Inanimate the gates of night fell about me.
Here in the place of my being's darkness, I stormed whirlwind of light
And my flesh, white out of darkness, was not flesh but sun!

Sun!
I said, I shall sing aloud, and I spoke light!
When I trampled my thought clouds, I grew suddenly light as wind,
    My body bereft of thought
    Struck waves of light, seas upon seas.

Then I laughed at fleeing darkness,
Not as a foe whose rear guard is captured, but like he whom death's fear seized,
    Whose feet wind grasped.

וַאֲנִי אַלְלַי־אַלְלַי. מֻטָּל חָשֵׁךְ בְּתוֹכִי
וַעֲמֻקִּים יִסּוּרֵי־הַחשֶׁךְ בַּחֲדָרַי.
וּבַחשֶׁךְ נוֹאַשְׁתִּי מִן הַבֹּקֶר וְאָמַרְתִּי בִּי לֹא יָבוֹא.
    לֹא יָבוֹא בִּי עוֹד הַבֹּקֶר כִּי יִתְהַלֵּךְ־יִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחוּץ,
וַאֲנִי מֻטָּל – וְהִנֵּה חָשֵׁךְ בְּתוֹכִי.

אַךְ פִּתְאֹם צָעַקְתִּי:
    שֶׁמֶשׁ!
    אֲנִי אֱהִי לָךְ בֹּקֶר!
וּלְפֶתַע נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי כֻּלִּי וּפָקַע בִּי שׁוֹשַׁן הַנֶּפֶשׁ מִבִּפְנִים.
    אוֹ נָגְעָה בְּנַפְשִׁי יַד־אִשָּׁה,
    אוֹ צִפּוֹר שׁוֹרְרָה עַל מֵיתָרֶיהָ.
דּוֹמְמִים נָפְלוּ שַׁעֲרֵי הַלַּיְלָה סָבִיב.
וְהִנֵּה תַּחַת חשֶׁךְ־עוֹרְקַי סָעַרְתִּי סוּפַת הָאוֹר
וּבְשָׂרִי הַלָּבָן מֵחשֶׁךְ הָיָה לֹא־בָשָׂר – כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ!

שֶׁמֶשׁ!
אָמַרְתִּי, אָשִׁירָה בְּקוֹלִי וְהִנֵּה דִּבַּרְתִּי אוֹר!
וְכִי דָרַכְתִּי עַנְנֵי־מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי, קַלּוֹתִי פֶּתַע כָּרוּחַ,
    וְגוּפִי חֲסַר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת –
    מַכֶּה גַלֵּי־אוֹר יַמִּים־יַמִּים.

אָז צָחַקְתִּי לַחשֶׁךְ הַנָּס,
לֹא כַּצָּר הַנִּמְלָט יְזֻנַּב לַשֶּׁבִי, כִּי כְּמִי אֲחָזוֹ פַּחַד־מָוֶת
    וְרַגְלָיו לָפְתָה רוּחַ.

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Silent I laughed the wondrous joy,
Silent I sang within myself choirs of light.
My soul still recalled deep anguish of darkness, its chambers fell,
I did not dream to ascend all the pinnacles of light
For transcending my soul's understanding, sky above sky.

Then I laughed at the folly of sciences. They say the sun is round,
Circles in its orbit.
Why, it has neither form nor path
Save the being of eternal light!

Light!
My soul laughed light,
My flesh spoke sun instead of blood —
For I did not wait for the morning to come to me from outside —
But I shouted, I shall be sun!

Then from within the soul's rose blossomed in me,
Or a woman's hand touched my soul,
Or a bird sang above its chords.
And I awoke radiating the suddenly-forever.
And I radiated the morning from my flesh.

דּוּמָם צָחַקְתִּי נִפְלָא־אֹשֶׁר,
דּוּמָם נִגַּנְתִּי בִּי מַקְהֲלוֹת הָאוֹר,
וּבְעוֹד נִזְכְּרָה נַפְשִׁי עֹמֶק יִסּוּרֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ, רָדוּ חֲדָרֶיהָ,
לֹא חָלַמְתִּי עֲלוֹת כָּל גָּבְהֵי הָאוֹר,
כִּי גָּבְהוּ מִבִּינַת נַפְשִׁי שָׁמַיִם עַל שָׁמַיִם.

אָז צָחַקְתִּי אִוֶּלֶת הַמַּדָּעִים. הִגִּידוּ עֲגֻלָּה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ,
הוֹלֶכֶת־סוֹבֶבֶת בִּמְסִלָּתָהּ.
הֲלֹא אֵין צוּרָה לָהּ וָדֶרֶךְ
כִּי הֲוָיַת אוֹר־עוֹלָם!

אוֹר,
אוֹר צָחֲקָה נַפְשִׁי
וּבְשָׂרִי דִּבֵּר שֶׁמֶשׁ תַּחַת דָּם –
כִּי לֹא חִכִּיתִי לַבֹּקֶר – יָבוֹא אֵלַי מִבַּחוּץ –
כִּי צָעַקְתִּי אֱהִי שֶׁמֶשׁ!

וּפָקַע בִּי שׁוֹשַׁן הַנֶּפֶשׁ מִבִּפְנִים
אוֹ נָגְעָה בְּנַפְשִׁי יַד אִשָּׁה,
אוֹ צִפּוֹר שׁוֹרְרָה עַל מֵיתָרֶיהָ,
וָאִיקַץ וָאֶאוֹר פִּתְאֹם־עוֹלָמִים,
וְזָרַחְתִּי הַבֹּקֶר מִבְּשָׂרִי!

René's Songs*

First Song

Bright-haired am I, my face and body white.
Bright as my mother's hair;
White as my father's silence;
The day he ascended in the smoky chariots,*
Why did Lo-Imi* whisper in the frosty light that hour!
— René, you are the black flower.

In my lungs, the blood lurks
For the frost's white, the sheet's white,
Decay gnaws my teeth —
Is that why?

My bread is not moldy now,
Against my hunger
Again no one connives;
But night after night the corn bread
Still heaped under my mattress,
Lurks,
Humped,
For my midnight hunger.
Is that why?

שִׁירוֹ שֶׁל רְנֵי

שיר ראשון

בְּהִיר־שֵׂעָר, לְבֶן־פָּנִים־וָגֵו אֲנִי.
בָּהִיר כְּשַׂעֲרוֹת אִמִּי;
לָבָן כְּדוּמִיַּת אָבִי,
יוֹם בּוֹ עָלָה בְּמַרְכְּבוֹת־עָשָׁן,
וְלָמָּה לָאֲטָה לִי לֹא־אִמִּי לְאוֹר־הַכְּפוֹר:
– רְנֵי, אַתָּה הַפֶּרַח הַשָּׁחוֹר.

בְּרֵאוֹתַי אוֹרֵב הַדָּם
לְלֹבֶן כְּפוֹר, סָדִין,
וּבְשִׁנַּי כּוֹסֵס הַמַּק –
הֲמִשּׁוּם כָּךְ?

לַחְמִי אֵינוֹ עָבֵשׁ עַתָּה;
שׁוּב אֵין זוֹמֵם לְהַעֲרִים
עַל רַעֲבוֹנִי;
אַךְ לַיְלָה־לַיְלָה לֶחֶם־הַתִּירָס
עוֹד נֶעֱרָם מִתַּחַת מִזְרָנִי,
אוֹרֵב,
קְמוּר־גַּב,
לְרַעֲבוֹן־חֲצוֹת שֶׁלִּי –
הֲמִשּׁוּם כָּךְ?

I said to her:
Jacques' nose is scarred;
My brother was clear faced.
Marcel's eyes are vengeful;
My father's eyes are only haunted.
Jeannine's hands are sticky;
My sister's hands, frost on the forehead —
Is that why?

I said to her:
And you
With the warm, soft brown hair,
You are not
My mother —
Brown hair,
Is that why?

What did she see and hear in the frost's light that hour
That she whispered so:
— René, you are the black flower?

Second Song

My brothers are big, so much bigger than I.
All of them sit on the branches high.

אָמַרְתִּי לָהּ:
אַפּוֹ שֶׁל זַ׳קוֹ מְצֻלָּק;
אָחִי הָיָה טְהֹר־פָּנִים.
עֵינֵי מַרְסֶל נוֹקְמָנִיּוֹת;
עֵינֵי אָבִי – רַק מְרֻדָּפוֹת.
יְדֵי זַ׳נִין שַׁמְנוּנִיּוֹת;
יַד אֲחוֹתִי – כִּכְפוֹר עַל מֵצַח –
הֲמִשּׁוּם כָּךְ?

אָמַרְתִּי לָהּ:
וְאַתְּ,
חוּמַת שֵׂעָר חָמִים וָרַךְ,
אַתְּ לֹא –
אִמִּי,
חוּמַת־שֵׂעָר –
הֲמִשּׁוּם כָּךְ?

מָה רָאֲתָה וּמָה שָּׁמְעָה לְאוֹר־הַכְּפוֹר
שֶׁכָּךְ תִּלְאַט:
– רֶנֵי, אַתָּה הַפֶּרַח הַשָּׁחוֹר?

שיר שני

אַחַי גְּדוֹלִים הֵם, כֹּה גְּדוֹלִים מִמֶּנִּי.
כֻּלָּם יוֹשְׁבִים בֵּין אֲמִירִים.

My father's voice rises from the sky.
It whispers to mother, returning birds fly.

My brothers are big, so much bigger than I.
They rejoice with the wind at a star's touch.
My father barks from the heights of the night.
To me mother murmurs: "Now, René, come up."

My brothers, blood lurks for each cough.
With each loaf of bread the mouth kisses pain.
Father, tomorrow the spring will soar at you.
Mother, tomorrow my spellbound voice will be changed.

Third Song

Lo-Imi, Lo-Imi!
From the garden I call you
I stand by the bamboo tree.
Come please to the veranda to see the wonder,
To caress the bud.

For I woke at midnight to pay my night's debt
I stretched my hand into darkness;
As always, into darkness —
But my midnight hunger did not take it;

וְקוֹל אָבִי עוֹלֶה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם.
לָאֵם לוֹאֵט עַל שׁוּב הַצִּפֳּרִים.

אַחַי גְּדוֹלִים הֵם, כֹּה גְּדוֹלִים מִמֶּנִּי.
כֻּלָּם שָׂשִׂים עִם רוּחַ אֶל מַגַּע כּוֹכָב.
אָבִי נוֹבֵחַ מִגָּבְהֵי־הַלַּיְלָה.
אִמִּי לוֹאֶטֶת לִי: עֲלֵה, רֶנִי, עַכְשָׁיו.

עַל כָּל שִׁעוּל אוֹרֵב הַדָּם, אַחַי,
עִם כָּל כִּכַּר הַפֶּה נוֹשֵׁק מַכְאוֹב.
מָחָר, אָבִי, אָבִיב יַמְרִיא עָלֶיךָ.
אִמִּי, מָחָר יֹאבַד קוֹלִי־מֵאוֹב.

שיר שלישי

לֹא־אִמִּי, לֹא־אִמִּי!
אֲנִי קוֹרֵא לָךְ מֵהַגַּן.
אֲנִי עוֹמֵד לְיַד עֵץ הַבַּמְבּוּק.
צְאִי־נָא לַגְּזֻזְטְרָה לַחֲזוֹת בַּפֶּלֶא,
לְלַטֵּף נִצָּן.

כִּי קַמְתִּי בַּחֲצוֹת לִפְרֹעַ חוֹב־לֵילִי.
שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת יָדִי לָאֲפֵלָה,
כְּמוֹ תָמִיד, לָאֲפֵלָה –
וְרַעֲבוֹן־חֲצוֹת שֶׁלִּי לֹא נְטָלָהּ;

In vain I sought the humped backs —
They were gone.

Then I heard at midnight
(song dearest of songs)
How the wind is piping in the bamboo:
Melted the frost-frozen hours.
There are no black flowers.

I called out:
Marcel, merciful eyed,
Jacques, pure faced,
Jeannine, soft hands,
Awake,
Waken, embrace me in the dance of pipes…

Then I saw at midnight
Clouds pregnant with moon
Swell in the ripe aura
And a silver thread fastening their edges.

Then I saw at midnight
How an almond tree
Glides suddenly to your window
Like the scented snow;

לַשָּׁוְא בִּקַּשְׁתִּי אֶת קְמוּרֵי הַגַּב –
אֵינָם.

וְאָז שָׁמַעְתִּי בַּחֲצוֹת
(שִׁיר יָקָר לִי מִשִּׁירִים)
כֵּיצַד הָרוּחַ בַּבַּמְבּוּק מְחַלְּלָה:
נָמַסּוּ הַכְּפוֹרִים.
אֵין פְּרָחִים שְׁחוֹרִים.

קָרָאתִי:
מַרְסֶל חֲנוּן־עֵינַיִם,
זַ׳קוֹ טְהוֹר־פָּנִים,
זַ׳נִּין רַכַּת־יָדַיִם,
עוּרוּ,
עוּרוּ וְחַבְּקוּנִי בִּמְחוֹל־הַחֲלִילִים…

וְאָז רָאִיתִי בַּחֲצוֹת
עָבִים הָרֵי־לְבָנָה
תּוֹפְחִים בַּנֹּגַהּ הַבָּשֵׁל
וְחוּט־הַכֶּסֶף שׁוּלֵיהֶם הוֹדֵק.

וְאָז רָאִיתִי בַּחֲצוֹת
כֵּיצַד גּוֹלְשָׁה לְפֶתַע
שְׁקֵדִיָּה אֶל חַלּוֹנֵךְ
בַּשֶּׁלֶג הַבָּשׂוּם;

Breaks into your room
With stunning abundance;
Breaks through to your heart
With white blossoms ashower —

There are no black flowers.

Lo-Imi, my mother!
Please come to the veranda
Look at me here in the garden.
Listen to the fragrance of the tiding.

When the pipes break forth
From the tender bamboo trunk
Swaying in the wind;
When the Chevreaux valley
Sparkles like a many-colored vase;

When the shining bud sings
I fasten my mouth
To the pipe
And spring melodies break forth and rise
Out of this damaged lung of mine
From between my decaying teeth —

פּוֹרֶצֶת אֶל חַדְרֵךְ
בְּשֶׁפַע הַהוֹמֵם;
הוֹרֶסֶת אֶל לִבֵּךְ
בְּנִצָּנֶיהָ הַצְּחוֹרִים –

אֵין פְּרָחִים שְׁחוֹרִים.

לֹא־אִמִּי, אִמִּי!
צְאִי־נָא לַגְּזֻזְטְרָה.
רְאִינִי כָּאן, בַּגָּן.
הַקְשִׁיבִי בֹּשֶׂם־הַבְּשׂוֹרָה:

בִּבְקֹעַ חֲלִילִים
מִגֶּזַע הַבַּמְבּוּק הָרַךְ,
הַנָּע לָרוּחַ;
בִּבְהֹק גֵּיא־הַשֶּׁוְרוֹ
כַּאֲגַרְטַל רְוֵה־גַּוָּן;

בְּרֹן נִצָּן זָהוֹר –
מַצְמִיד אֲנִי אֶת פִּי
אֶל הֶחָלִיל
וּמַנְגִּינַת אָבִיב בּוֹקַעַת וְעוֹלָה
מִתּוֹךְ זוֹ רֵאָתִי פְּגוּמָה,
מִבֵּין שִׁנַּי הַנְּמַקּוֹת –

My mother, my mother!
Like the almond tree I burst in Spring's heart,
Into the heart of Springtime with lively pipes.

There are no black flowers!

She Sleeps

She sleeps: yet is her hand awake
More than the surgeon's palm
To breathe, to pulse, to smell,
To murmur of the dirge that hidden breaks.

She sleeps: but cocked remain her ears
For the chill metal's clink, the glide
Of heavy eyelid. Always she bides
For sudden silence and malaise.

She sleeps: still her eye she keeps
On you, on falling leaves, on rushing Spring,
On the next to die, on the soul of living things,
Peace to her dream. She sleeps.

Yet cuts her faithful fingering
Till sunset in the living flesh.

אִמִּי, אִמִּי!
אֶל לֵב־אָבִיב אֲנִי פּוֹרֵץ כַּשְּׁקֵדִיָּה,
אֶל לֵב־אָבִיב בַּחֲלִילִים עֵרִים –

אֵין פְּרָחִים שְׁחוֹרִים!

הִיא יְשֵׁנָה

הִיא יְשֵׁנָה; אֲבָל יָדָהּ עֵרָה
יוֹתֵר מִכַּף־יָדוֹ שֶׁל הַמְנַתֵּחַ
לָרוּחַ וְלַדְפֹּק וְלָרִיחַ,
לְרַחֵשׁ הַקִּינָה הַמְּסֻתֶּרֶת.

הִיא יְשֵׁנָה; אֲבָל אָזְנָהּ פְּקוּחָה
לְקִישׁ מַתֶּכֶת קְרִירָה וְנִיד
עַפְעַף כָּבֵד. הִיא עֲרוּכָה תָּמִיד
לְדוּמִיַּת־פִּתְאֹם וְלַמְּבוּכָה.

הִיא יְשֵׁנָה; אֲבָל בְּךָ עֵינָהּ,
בְּפַחַז הָאָבִיב וּבַשַּׁלֶּכֶת,
בַּמֵּת הַבָּא, וּבְנִשְׁמַת־כָּל־חַי...
שָׁלוֹם לַחֲלוֹמָהּ. הִיא יְשֵׁנָה.

אֲבָל יָדָהּ הָאֱמוּנָה חוֹתֶכֶת
עַד בּוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּבָשָׂר הַחַי.

Cat in the Dovecote

He climbed, devoured. In her mouth
Nothing will remain,
And she will not return to the ark.*

Satisfied and tranquil
He glides on velvet paws,
His knives padded,
Until he finds a resting place
And picks the bones.

A drizzle.
Only a drizzle.
There will be no deluge again.

חָתוּל בַּשּׁוֹבָךְ

עָלָה, טָרַף. בְּפִיהָ
לֹא יִהְיֶה עוֹד דָּבָר,
וְלֹא תוֹסִיף לָשׁוּב אֶל הַתֵּבָה.

הִשְׁלִים וּבְשָׁלוֹם
יַחֲלִיק עַל קְטִיפוֹתָיו,
סַכִּינָיו מְרֻפָּדוֹת.
עַד יִמְצָא מָנוֹחַ לְרַגְלָיו,
וִיגָרֵם.

זַרְזִיף.
זַרְזִיף בִּלְבַד.
מַבּוּל לֹא יִהְיֶה עוֹד.

Sunbeams

Do not allow the sun to dim.
Out of paper, friendship, smiles,
Cut many suns
As one cuts cookies with the glass's rim.

Let it be round,
Rays extending from it
(They'll say: make believe!)
Two lines like two hands,
Outspread with a fistful of seeds,
Two lines like two feet,
Tracing love on the ground,
Give it many rays —
Don't be grudging —
As many as will stretch
From you to the people around.

קַרְנַיִם

אַל תִּתֵּן לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לִכְבּוֹת.
מִנְּיָר, מֵאַחֲוָה, חִיּוּכִים,
גְּזֹר שְׁמָשׁוֹת לָרֹב
בְּפִי הַכּוֹס, כְּמַעֲשֵׂה עוּגוֹת.

תֵּן לָהּ לִהְיוֹת עָגוֹל,
וְקַוִּים יוֹצְאִים מִמֶּנּוּ
(יֹאמְרוּ: בְּדָיָה!):
שְׁנֵי קַוִּים כִּשְׁתֵּי יָדַיִם
פְּשׁוּטוֹת עִם חֹפֶן הַזֶּרַע,
שְׁנֵי קַוִּים: כִּשְׁתֵּי רַגְלַיִם
הַכּוֹתְבוֹת אַהֲבָה לָאָרֶץ,
וְתֵן לָהּ הַרְבֵּה קַוִּים –
אַל תַּחְסֹךְ –
כְּמִסְפָּר הַנִּתָּן לְהִמָּתַח
מִמְּךָ אֶל הָאֲנָשִׁים סָבִיב.

Handfuls of Wind

All that I have —
Handfuls of wind,*
A gift for the kingdom of birds.

All the silences —
A throatful — small silences,
A present
For the stone and the doe.

All the illumination —
Flask of illumination,
For the sea of rising dawn
An offering.

With all one's heart
With all one's might
As both innocent and guilty.

And my eyes shall not see
The ocean overflowing
Its banks...

מְלֹא חָפְנַיִם רוּחַ

כָּל מַה שֶּׁיֵּשׁ לִי –
מְלֹא חָפְנַיִם רוּחַ,
שַׁי לְמַמְלֶכֶת צִפֳּרִים.

כָּל הַשְּׁתִיקוֹת –
מְלֹא הַגָּרוֹן מְעַט שְׁתִיקוֹת
מַתָּת
לָאֶבֶן וְלָאַיָּלָה.

כָּל הַמָּאוֹר –
צְלוֹחִית הַמָּאוֹר.
לְיָם הַשַּׁחַר הָעוֹלֶה
מַשְׂאֵת.

בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם
בְּכָל הַמְּאֹד
כְּזוֹכֶה וְחַיָּב.

וְעֵינַי לֹא תֶחֱזֶינָה
בַּעֲבֹר הַיָּם
עַל גְּדוֹתָיו...

NOTES ON THE POEMS

(All biblical citations and quotations are from *Holy Scriptures* according to the Masoretic text [Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962].)

BIALIK

The Pool, pp. 2–19

Presence. The visual presence of God (Shekinah) manifested as light or illumination. In Cabbala the feminine principle, the emanation through which the natural world is created. According to legend, the Shekinah took upon herself the state of exile so that she might accompany the Jewish people in their suffering and be their comforter.

Elijah. The prophet who was taken to heaven alive in the fiery chariot. According to legend, he wanders the earth to reveal himself as a bearer of good tidings. It is said that he will bring the tidings of the coming of the Messiah and go before him.

And If the Angel Should Ask, pp. 24–29

Gemara. The Passages of Talmud which deal with *halakah* or law. The subject of exegesis based on biblical text as codified in the Mishnah.

Fringes *(zizit)*. They were worn at the four corners of the prayer shawl, and were a reminder of the duties toward the holy law and of God's love for Israel. Made according to certain specifications, they were considered defective when they became torn or altered and had to be replaced.

Small prayer shawl. Although a large prayer shawl was used during devotional services, in daily life it was customary for young boys and pious men to wear a small prayer shawl with their clothing.

I Have a Garden, pp. 28–35

Bridal canopy. It is customary for a Jewish wedding to be performed under a velvet canopy supported by four poles.

TCHERNICHOVSKY

To the Sun, pp. 38–45

The dedication to the sonnet sequence is taken from the second Order of Mishnah called *Moed*, and a Tractate called *Sukkah* deals with the Feast of Tabernacles.

Iris and the anemone. In the Hebrew text the iris and the anemone are called "Hyacinthus and Adonis." These words denote the mythical flower springing from the spilled blood of these two, beloved of Venus. The poet uses this allusion not only in the specific Greek sense but also in the broader Mediterranean connotation of nature worship.

Sheba's traders. The merchants who brought gold dust and spices from Ethiopia, the land of the legendary queen.

The image-kingdom's idol of the generation past. After enumerating the various deities of Greek and Mediterranean origin, in addition to his own, which drew him through history, Tchernichovsky, the poet-physician, designates Science the deity of the generation preceding his. "The image-kingdom's idol" is thus exemplified by the Theory of Evolution as developed by Darwin.

Levivot, pp. 44–67

In contemporary Hebrew, *levivot* means pancakes. In this poem, however, the poet refers to a dough filled with cheese, then boiled in hot water and washed with buttermilk.

Tzena Urena. A collection of Midrash (imaginative stories interpreting verses of the Bible) which were written in Yiddish for women.

Supplications of Sara Bat-Tuvim. A book of prayers used particularly by women.

Unclean blemish. Books in a foreign language were considered dangerous by the extremely pious, who feared their contamination.

The fortress of Peter and Paul. In Czarist Russia political prisoners and those active in revolutionary movements were confined here.

The Bells, pp. 66–71

Thunder of bells. In Russia and Poland the ringing of church bells often aroused the mob during a pogrom.

Haidamaks. Armed bands of rebellious peasants headed by Cossack leaders in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Torah scroll. The parchment scrolls upon which the books of the Bible are inscribed and kept in the Ark in synagogues.

"Thirty-Six Just." According to legend and folklore, there are thirty-six righteous men in each generation who live anonymous, humble lives. Their acts of humane piety and simple human kindness merit for the world the divine grace that prevents its destruction.

Prayer for the dead. The Kaddish is the traditional prayer that glorifies and sanctifies the name of God, thereby affirming the immortality of the soul. The first part of the "Lord's Prayer" is derived from this prayer.

The watch of the midnight hour. The watch called *Tikkun Hazot* (an act of mending) when the pious rise at midnight to mourn the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the people. In legend it was the possible moment of miracle.

They Say There Is a Country, pp. 70–73

Seven pillars. The seven pillars of wisdom.

Seven wandering stars. The ancient term for the planets that moved through the firmament.

Akiba. The Rabbinic teacher who was burned alive by the Romans because he encouraged the rebellion against Rome in the first century.

Maccábee. The popular name given the Hasmonean family who led the revolt against the Selucid dynasty of Syria in the second century, B.C.E. Emperor Antiochus Epiphanes attempted the forcible conversion of the Jews to the Greek religion. The Syrian Greeks were driven from the country and Hebrew sovereignty reëstablished. Maccábee means *hammer*, and it is also the acrostic in Hebrew of the first letters of a motto, "Who Is Like Thee Oh God." In modern Hebrew *Maccábee* is a symbolic term for those who oppose tyranny.

SCHNEOUR

The Middle Ages Draw Near, pp. 90–95

Schneour wrote this poem in 1913 while traveling in Germany. He defined the spirit of the twentieth century not as modern but as a reversion to the spirit of the middle ages at the time of the Great Inquisitors.

The Fruited Month, pp. 98–101

THE FRUITED MONTH. The eighth month of the Hebrew lunar calendar, called *Iyar;* it usually falls toward the end of April and the beginning of May.

NARGILEH. Oriental water pipe.

Poppies, pp. 100–101

THE GREEN IS NOT CONSUMED. From Exodus 3:2— ". . . the bush burns with fire, and the bush is not consumed."

HAMEIRI

Passover in Jerusalem, pp. 102–103

KING MESSIAH. The traditional concept of the Redeemer, a man born out of the house of David who would restore a peaceful kingdom to the earth and bring unity and fulfillment to the Jewish people and to all mankind.

KARNI

Put Me into the Breach, pp. 108–109

THE MESSIAH'S ADVENT. According to Hebrew legend, the Messiah would enter the city of Jerusalem through the Shaar Harahamim, the Mercy Gate in the old wall of the city.

BLUWSTEIN

Aftergrowth, pp. 112–113

AFTERGROWTH. The kernels that fall to the ground from stalks, as they are harvested, to sprout the following year.

GREENBERG

By the Waters of the Sava, pp. 116–117

THE SAVA. A river in Yugoslavia where Austrian and Russian troops met in battle during World War I, and where Greenberg fought as a young soldier.

IN THE MYSTERY OF FEAR *(pahad)*. While the literal meaning of *pahad* in Hebrew is fear, it is also one of the designated names of God. ". . . except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac . . ." (Genesis 31:42).

A Penny for You, pp. 116–119

The Hebrew word *Asimon* is translated as *penny*. It means literally an old minted coin without any imprint, of the least valuable denomination.

At Your Feet, Jerusalem, pp. 120–125

HORA. A popular pioneer folk dance derived from Slavic and Hassidic origins.

GOD WILL BUILD THE DESOLATION. An early Zionist song asks "Who will build Galilee?" It answers "We will build Galilee, God will build Galilee." Greenberg uses the last half of the phrase with a satirical twist.

Lord You Saved Me from Ur-Germany, pp. 126–129

UR-GERMANY. Ur-Chaldea was the birthplace of Abraham, the patriarchal father of the Jewish people. According to legend, when King Nimrod cast him into the fiery furnace, the furnace was transformed into a green country where Abraham walked unharmed.

LAKE-OF-WEEPING. In modern Hebrew, Lake Galilee is called Kinneret, because it is shaped like a harp. The poet uses the term "Kinneret of Weeping" in the Hebrew to structure his poem about this major image.

LAMDAN

In the Khamsin, pp. 130–135

KHAMSIN. This word, Arabic for a foehn wind or sirocco, has become part of the modern Hebrew vocabulary.

BASKET OF CHILDHOOD. The phrase refers to the basket containing the infant Moses as described in Exodus.

IKVAH. A stream in the forest of the Ukraine near Lamdan's birthplace.

YELLOW BADGE. The yellow mark Jews were compelled to wear in the Middle Ages which the Nazis revived.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL. Genesis 21:20–21.

Israel, pp. 136–137

LIMPING UPON MY THIGH. Genesis 32:25.

HALKIN

Reward, pp. 138–141

THRONE OF GLORY. The mystic throne, or seat of God, seen in the vision of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1.

PRAYER'S LADDER. A comparison with Jacob's ladder upon which angels ascended and descended. Genesis 28:12.

To Tarshish, pp. 144–157

TARSHISH. The city to which the Prophet Jonah fled from God, who then sent him to Nineveh instead. Jonah 1:3.

SIVAN. The ninth month of the Hebrew lunar calendar, usually around June or July.

Returned atoms of the God become unities. "In the mystic concept of creation according to Isaac Luria and his school the first configuration of divine light flows from the essence of the infinite One into primal space. At first these lights were coalesced in a totality or form without differentiation.... The light coming from the eyes of this primal form (Adam Kadmon) emanated in atomized form. . . . This world of punctiform lights is also called the world of confusion or disorder. Since the divine scheme of things involved the creation of finite beings and forms... it was necessary that the isolated lights be caught and preserved in special receptacles created or rather emanated for this particular purpose. When the lower six emanations could not bear the impact of the light they broke and shattered. . . . The Breaking of the vessels is compared to the break-through of birth, the deepest convulsion of the living organism. . . . At any rate the breaking of the Vessels in the literature of the Lurian Kabbalah is the decisive turning point in the cosmological process. Taken as a whole it is the cause of the inner deficiency inherent in everything that exists. Conversely the restoration of ideal order which forms the original aim of creation is also the secret purpose of existence. Salvation means actually nothing but restitution, reintegration of the original whole or Tikkun to use the Hebrew term. . . ." — Gershon G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1951), pp. 265–268.

Seventy-five Are My Abyssed Forests, pp. 158–159

The gold bird. The beloved — a reference to *tzipor hanefesh*, the bird of the soul.

BAT-MIRIAM

Like This Before You, pp. 160–163

Not charming, not painted with pink and blue. In the Talmudic tractate Ketubot (marriage agreements), there is a discussion of a Mishnah dealing with laws concerning the divorced woman (Chap. II, p. 15, col. 2). Into this discussion are injected extraneous, spontaneous questions. The first asks what is customary praise to speak to a bride. The school of Hillel says all brides are to be pronounced beautiful and wise, but the school of Shammai says that a bride must be praised for her own qualities, just as she is. The second question (p. 17, col. 1) asks what may be sung to the bride as she is carried upon a litter to her wedding. The answer is given to Rabbi Dimi in a formula: ". . . without blue paint upon her eyes, pink powder upon her face and without elaborate coiffure, she is still charming as a gazelle." The poet adapts this text to her psychological state. Feeling herself divorced and rejected, she takes for herself, nevertheless, the bride's prerogative — to be accepted as she is. The "You" she addresses may be a husband or lover, but she is also speaking to God.

The Distance Spills Itself, pp. 164-165

Mezuzah. The name of a small receptacle of wood or metal containing a parchment with the prayer "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord Is One." Fastened to the doorposts of the Jewish home, it is traditionally kissed as one enters or leaves the house.

"Adoration." The prayer sanctifying God's name in the liturgy. It is taken from Isaiah 6:3 — "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole world fills with his glory."

SHLONSKY

Jezrael, pp. 170–179

Phylacteries. Two small leather boxes, each containing four scriptural passages, fixed to looped leather squares. The arm phylactery is bound to the right arm, and the head phylactery is bound to the forehead. Put on by men with the prayer shawl before the morning service, they are a reminder of the binding covenant between the Jew and his God. According to Maimonides, their purpose was to direct man's meditation toward truth and righteousness.

Balaam. See Numbers 23–24.

Morning in My City, pp. 186–189

Cabbalist. A student and practitioner of mysticism.

Ten young men. Although it is permitted to pray and study alone, communal prayer requires a congregation of a minyan, or ten.

Ineffable Name. The Tetragrammaton YHWY is the distinctive personal name of the God of Israel which is customarily Anglicized as Jehovah. Used by the High Priest in temple services in Jerusalem until the year 30, C.E., it was then forbidden to be pronounced, and the term *Adonai Elohim* or Lord

God was substituted in prayer. It continued to form an important part of mystic teaching and practice. Cabbalists believed that the sounding of this name under proper circumstances held great power and could accomplish miracles.

EVERY THREAD OF MY BODY EXPRESSES IT, WITH EACH FIBER IN THE DEWY TREE, MEDITATING UPON ITS SYMBOLS. According to Cabbalist symbolism, the Sephirot (ten spheres of creation) form two corresponding configurations: the body of a man *(Adam Kadmon)* and/or the figure of a tree; thus the body of the poet and the tree on the construction lot symbolize the miracle of creation in contemporary terms and times.

SHALOM

Suddenly We Will Wake, pp. 192–193

TABLET OF THE HEART. Proverbs 3:3. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee. . . write them upon the tablet of thine heart."

Drink Wonder, pp. 192–195

INFINITE LIGHT *(ein sof)*. "The impersonal character of this aspect of the hidden God. . . signifies 'the infinite' not as He who is infinite, but that which is infinite" (Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 12).

ALTERMAN

The Joy of the Poor, pp. 212–221

BEARERS-OF-THE-ARK. In biblical usage the word ark *(aron)* signifies the *ark of the covenant*. In modern Hebrew *aron* also means a coffin. In biblical usage the bearers of the ark were the priests. In Alterman's use of this phrase, the bearers of the ark are pallbearers.

CONVERT. One who has changed from the religion of life to that of death.

ROKEAH

Hands Full of Sun, pp. 272–273

IZDARAC. A flowering shrub of Israel.

GURI

The Silent Words, pp. 284–287

SHAMIR. A Hebrew word for the legendary worm described in the legends of King Solomon which had the power to cut and shape the hardest substance at touch. It was used to build the Temple where metal tools (instruments used for war) were forbidden.

His Mother, pp. 288–291

Lines 5–6 are from Judges 5:30.

Odysseus, pp. 294–297

EURYCLEIA. The old nurse of Odysseus who recognized him by his childhood scar as she washed his feet when he returned as a stranger to his home.

Piyyut for Rosh Hashana, pp. 298–299

Before the Hebrew New Year it is customary to recite a group of hymns *(piyyutim)* called *Selihot* which ask forgiveness. Yet tradition holds that before one can be forgiven, one must also forgive. See also Introduction.

AMIHAI

On My Birthday, pp. 302–305

TALMUD. A page of Talmud is composed of a portion of Mishnah expanded by both legal exegesis and legend which is in turn surrounded by many commentaries upon the passage. In the printed text the commentary on the page therefore surrounds and encloses a fragment of text with many columns and lines. See also Introduction.

RASHI. The name refers to Rabbi Solomon Bar Isaac (1040–1105), a Hebrew scholar of Troyes, France, who wrote an important commentary on the Bible and the Talmud noted for its clarity and insight.

TOSAPHISTS. A critical explanatory gloss on the Talmud given in the margins of texts opposite Rashi's notes. The Tosaphists began to compose their commentary in the immediate period after Rashi, and they followed his style.

Leaves Without Trees, pp. 304–307

EVEN THAT ONE. The phrase refers to the small stone in David's sling which killed Goliath (I Samuel 17:49). In contemporary metaphor it means the small Israeli force that defeated the seven Arab armies that attempted to prevent the establishment of Israel in 1948.

GALAI

Of Those Who Go, Not to Return, pp. 312–315

Not the dead today shall praise you, God! Compare Psalms 115:17: "Not the dead shall praise the Lord."

Better the live dog than the dead lion. Ecclesiastes 9:4.

CARMI

René's Songs, pp. 328–339

In 1946 Carmi worked in France in refugee orphanages. The orphaned children mentioned in "*Réne's Songs*" are drawn from this experience. The orphanage was set in a dilapidated chateau which, incongruously, had bamboo trees in a grotto. "René's Songs" occur at various places throughout the book *There Are No Black Flowers* (Carmi's first volume of poetry). The title of the volume of poetry, which is also the refrain in the poems, is a quotation from "On Style" (from Marx and Engels, *Literature and Art* [International Publishers], p. 60): ". . . the essential form of the spirit is gaiety and light, and you make shadows its only manifestation; it must be dressed only in black and yet there are no black flowers. . ." (Karl Marx).

Smoky chariots. Elijah's chariot of fire that carried him to heaven; the crematorium of the concentration camp whose smokestacks René remembers.

Lo-Imi ("*Not My Mother*"). This term of rejection is derived from the book of Hosea, where the prophet names his child symbolically *Lo Ami* (Not My People) (Hosea 1:9). In the poem *Lo-Imi* is the name René gives the directress of the orphanage.

TRAININ

Cat in the Dovecote, pp. 340–341

Ark. This usage refers to Genesis 8:11, which tells of the dove bringing an olive leaf on her return to the ark.

MAR

Handfuls of Wind, pp. 344–345

Wind. This is a translation of the Hebrew word *Ruah* which means *wind*, but also *spirit*.

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NOTES ON THE POETS

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman (1873–1934)
Born in Volhynia, Russia. He received a traditional Hebrew education. At the age of eleven he began to read the medieval Hebrew literature; at sixteen he studied at the Talmudic Academy of Voloshin and began to read widely in secular modern Hebrew literature and Russian literature. He wrote his first poetry in Voloshin. In 1891 he came to Odessa and succeeded in publishing his first poem. Returning home, he became a teacher and began to write the poetry and the short stories that brought him recognition. In 1901 he was invited to return to Odessa, the active Hebrew literary center, where he published his first volume of poetry and became literary editor of *Hashiloach*. Together with Ravnitzki and Benzion he founded the Moriah Publishing Company. With Ravnitzki he reëdited for modern readers *Sefer Ha'aggada* (1908–1910) and collaborated in the publication of works of medieval Hebrew poets (Ibn Gabirol and Moshe Ibn Ezra). In 1924 he settled in Palestine and established the Dvir Publishing Company, of which he was editor. In Palestine he became an animating spirit of cultural activity and was chairman of the Hebrew Language Committee. He went to America in 1926 and to Poland and Lithuania in 1931 on cultural missions. After his death a prize in belle-lettres bearing his name was established by the city of Tel Aviv, and Mosad Bialik, a publishing house for fostering Hebrew literature, was founded by the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. Among his translations are Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, and S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*. His poems have been translated into Russian, German, English, French, and Italian.

Prose works: *Devorim Shebeal Peh* (2 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1935), *Vayehi Hayom* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1934) [translated by H. Danby as *Stories about King David and King Solomon* (1938)], *Safiah* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1934) [translated by I. M. Lask as *Aftergrowth and Other Stories* (1939)], *Divrey Aggadah* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1934), and *Igrot* (4 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1935).

Poetic works: *Shirim* (Warsaw: Toshiah, 1902), *Shirim* (Odessa, 1908), *Kitvey Bialik Umivhar Tirgumav* (4 vols.; Berlin: Vaad Hayovel, 1923), *Kitvey Bialik* (4 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1933; 2d ed., 1935), *Kol Kitvey Bialik*, Mavo mayet Y. Fichman (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1939).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Kol Kitvey Bialik* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1939).

Tchernichovsky, Saul (1875–1943)
Born in the Crimea, Russia. He was first taught Hebrew by his father and then by modern tutors until he was fifteen. He studied Russian at a village school and at the Gymnasium in Odessa, where he began to write poetry and translate into Hebrew. He studied at the universities of Heidelberg and Lausanne (1899–1906), became a doctor of medicine, and a practicing government physician in Kharkov, Petersburg, and Finland. In World War I he was a military surgeon with the Russian Red Cross. After 1922 he lived in Berlin; he visited Palestine in 1925, the United States in 1930, and then settled in Palestine in 1931. He continued to write and practice medicine all his life. He completed and edited the Hebrew medical dictionary commenced by Dr. A. Maze. In addition, he wrote a critical study of the Hebrew poet *Imanuel Haromi* (Tel Aviv, 1935). Among his translations are Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *Kalevala* (the Finnish epic), *Gilgamesh* (the Babylonian epic), Anacreon's *Poems*, Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Moliere's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*, Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*, and Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. He was a member of the Hebrew Language Committee and of the Executive Council of the Hebrew University. The city of Tel Aviv established a prize in his honor for translation into Hebrew. His own poems have been translated into English, French, German, Italian, and Russian.

Poetic works: *Hezyonot Umanginot* (Warsaw: Toshiah, 1899), with more poems under same title published in 1902; *Machberet Hasonnetot* and *Sefer Ha'idilyot* (Berlin, 1922); *Shirim Hadashim* (Leipzig, 1924); *Kitvey Shaul Tchernichovsky* (10 vols.; Berlin and New York, 1929–1934); *Kol Shirey Tchernichovsky* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1937); *Shirim* (Jerusalem: Yovel, 1943); *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1951).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1951).

Cohen, Yakov (1881–1959)
Born in Russia, he grew up in Poland and was educated at a school conducted by a modern Hebrew teacher. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Bern. In 1910 he became director of the Organization for Hebrew Language and Culture, Berlin. He was supervisor of Hebrew gymnasiums in Poland and lecturer in Hebrew Literature at the Institute of Jewish Studies, Warsaw, from 1924 to 1934, when he left to settle in Palestine. Besides lyric poetry, he wrote verse dramas and short stories, and received the Bialik Prize for his verse drama. He translated Goethe's *Iphigenia auf Tauris*, *Torquato Tasso*, and the first part of *Faust*, for which he received the Tchernichovsky Prize. He was editor of the journal *Hatkufah* and of the belles-lettres section of *Knesset*, and a member of the Hebrew Language Committee.

Poetic works: *Shirim* (1903, 1905, 1913, 1925, 1930); *Neurim Unedudim* and *Bayn Haharavot* from *Ketuvim* (10 vols.; Tel Aviv: Vaad Hayovel, 1938); *Tzion Baazikim* (Tel Aviv, 1941).

The poem translated in this volume was taken from A. Barash, ed., *Mivhar Hashirah Haivrit Hahadasha* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1948).

Fichman, Yakov (1881–1958)
Born in Bessarabia, he received a traditional Hebrew education and graduated from the Teachers' Institute of Grodno. In 1901 he worked with Bialik in Odessa and later with Frishman on the *Hatsofeh*, where his first poetry and critical essays on European literature appeared. He joined the editorial staff of *Moriah* in 1909. In 1925 he went to settle in Palestine, where he edited *Moledet*, *Ma'barot*, and *Hashiloach*. His extensive essays on modern literature made him a leading critic of this early period. His textbooks for the study of Hebrew literature had an important influence on Hebrew education. For many years he edited *Moznaim* and was a member of the Hebrew Language Committee. His translations include Hebbel's *Herod and Miriamne* and the poetry of Heine and Goethe. His literary essays and critical works include *Bevaot* (1919); *Bialik Haiyov Umaasov* (1933); *Anshe Besorah* (1938); *Sofrim Behaiyahem* (1942); *Shirat Bialik* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1946), for which he received the Usishkin Prize; *Amat Habinyan* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1951), on the Odessa group of Hebrew writers — Mendle, Achad Haam, Bialik, Tchernichovsky; and *Ruchot Menagnot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1952), on Hebrew writers in Poland — Peretz, Frishman, Sokolow, Berditchewsky, *et al.*

Poetic works: *Givolim* (1911); *Yemei Shemesh* (1934); *Tzelalim Al Sadot* (1935); *Peat Sadeh* (1943), for which he received the Bialik Prize; *Aviv Beshomron* (1943); *Demuyot Kedumim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1948).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from A. Barash, ed., *Mivhar Hashirah Haivrit Hahadasha* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1948).

Shimoni, David (1886–1957)
Born in Russia. At seventeen his first poems began to appear in the Hebrew journals. In 1909 he went to Palestine, where he worked as a guard and as a laborer in the agricultural communities of Rehovot and Petach Tikvah. He returned to Europe in 1910 to complete his education, receiving his Ph.D. in Philosophy and Semitic languages from the University of Wurzburg. In 1920 he returned to Palestine and devoted himself to literature. He received the Bialik Prize in 1936 and was a member of the Hebrew Language Committee. He made translations from the works of Tolstoi, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Heine.

Poetic works: *Yeshimon* (1911), *Saar Udemama* (1912), *Ketuvim* (*Shirim, Idyliot, Poemot, Shirim Upoemot*) (4 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1925–1933), *Resisay Laiylah* (1940), *Mihtav Leay Sham* (1944), *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1944).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1944).

Schneour, Zalman (1887–1959)
Born in Russia to a distinguished Hassidic family, he ran away to Odessa at the age of fifteen to study and pursue a literary career. He worked in Warsaw for the publishing house Toshiah, and was secretary to the eminent prose writers Frishman and Peretz; Bialik also encouraged him in his writing. From 1906 to 1908 he studied in Switzerland and in Paris. Thereafter he traveled about Europe and North Africa, and was interned as an enemy alien in Germany during World War I. He lived in Paris after the war, and during World War II he went to New York. In 1951 he settled in Israel, receiving the Bialik Prize in the same year. With Bialik and Tchernichovsky he was a major poet of the early period of modern Hebrew poetry. His novels written in Yiddish have been

translated into French, English, and Hebrew: *Noah Pandre, Uncle Zama*, and *Men of Shklov*. A complete edition of Schneour's works was issued in 1958 by Dvir, Tel Aviv; it includes his novels, essays, reminiscences, and poetry.

Poetic works: *Im Shekiat Hahama* (Warsaw: Toshiah, 1907), *Shirim Ufoemot* (Warsaw: Toshiah, 1914), *Vilnah* (Berlin and New York, 1920-1923), *Hezyonot* (1924), *Gesharim* (1928), *Pirkey Yaar* (1933).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim* (2 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1958).

HAMEIRI, AVIGDOR (1890 ——)
Born in Hungary, he studied at the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest. He was an officer in the Hungarian Army during World War I and was taken prisoner of war in Russia. He lived in Odessa until 1921, when he went to Palestine. There he edited literary journals and wrote poetry, essays, and short stories. In 1927 he founded the first Hebrew theater of satire. He received the Bialik Prize in 1935.

Poetic works: *Mayshiray Avigdor Feurstein* (Budapest, 1911), *Sefer Hashirim* (Jerusalem: Am Hasefer, 1932), *Hamoked Haran* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1944), *Halomot Bet Raban* (Jerusalem: Massada, 1946).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Hamoked Haran* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1944).

KARNI, YEHUDA (1884–1948)
Born in Russia, he was secretary for the Russian Zionist movement and editor of the literary journal *Olam* (Odessa). He went to Palestine in 1921, where he became editor of the daily newspaper *Haaretz*. He was awarded the Bialik Prize in 1945.

Poetic works: *Shearim* (Tel Aviv, 1923), *Bish'araich Moledet* (Tel Aviv, 1935), *Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1944), *Shir Vadema* (Tel Aviv, 1944).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1944).

BLUWSTEIN, RAHEL (1890–1931)
Born in Russia, she studied at a Hebrew public school in Poltava and was graduated from a Russian gymnasium. She left her studies at Kiev Art School in 1909 and went to Palestine, where she was an agricultural worker in Rehovot and in the cooperative colony of Kinneret. In 1913 she studied agronomy in Toulouse, France. Forced to return to Russia by the outbreak of World War I, she taught in a school for refugee children. In 1919 she returned to Palestine, but lingering tuberculosis soon prevented physical work. She spent the last ten years of her life in and out of hospitals in Tel Aviv. She is buried in Kinneret.

Poetic works: *Safiah* (1927), *Mineged* (1930), *Nevo* (1932), *Shirat Rahel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1949).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirat Rahel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1949).

GREENBERG, URI TZVI (1894 ——)
Born in Galicia to a family of distinguished Hassidic rabbis, he received a traditional Hebrew education and served in the Austrian Army during World War I. He edited the *Albatross*, a journal of Yiddish expressionist poetry. In 1924 he joined the extreme nationalist group within the Zionist movement and wrote only in Hebrew. In that year he went to Palestine and worked in the labor corps, reclaiming land infested with malaria. He settled in Tel Aviv and devoted himself to poetry. He received the Bialik Prize for poetry in 1948 and was a member of the first Knesset (Parliament).

Poetic Works: *Eima Gedola Veyareah* (1925), *Hagavrut Ha'ola* (1926), *Anacreon al Kotev Ha'itzavon* (1928), *Hazon Ahad Haligyonot* (1928), *Kelapei Tish'im Vetish'a* (1928), *Kelev Bayit* (1929), *Sefer Hakitrug Veha'emunah* (1937), *Rehovot Hanahar* (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem: Schocken, 1951).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Anacreon Al Kotev Ha'itzavon* ("By the Waters of the Sava," "A Penny for You," and "In the Covenant's Radiance"), *Sefer Hakitrug Veha'emunah* ("At Your Feet, Jerusalem"), and *Rehovot Hanahar* ("We Were Not Likened to Dogs among the Gentiles" and "Lord! You Saved Me from Ur-Germany as I Fled").

LAMDAN, YITZHAK-(1900–1955)
Born in Volhynia, Russia, to a Hassidic family, he received a traditional Hebrew education. Separated from his parents by World War I, he wandered with his older brother. In 1917 he joined the Russian Army under Kerensky. He went to Palestine in 1920 and worked as a laborer building roads and as a farmhand.

His first volume of poetry, the epic *Massadah*, was reissued in seven editions. For eighteen years he edited *Gilyonot*, the monthly journal which was noted for new poetry, prose, and criticism, and was particularly hospitable to young, unknown writers. He received the Brenner Prize in 1947.

Poetic works: *Massadah* (1927), *Baritmah Hameṣhuleshet* (1930), *Misefer Hayamim* (1940), *Mahanayim* (1944), *Bemaaleh Akrabim* (1945).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Massadah* ("In the Khamsin") and *Bemaaleh Akrabim* ("Israel").

Halkin, Shimon (1898 ——)
Born in Lithuania to a family of noted Hassidic rabbis, he received a traditional Hebrew education. He went to America in 1914 with his family and studied at Columbia and New York University, where he received his Ph.D. He then went to Palestine to teach and write. From 1939 to 1949 he held academic posts in the United States, teaching Hebrew literature. In 1949 he was appointed to the faculty of the Hebrew University and subsequently became head of the Department of Hebrew Literature. In 1954 he was Visiting Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he inaugurated the Department of Hebrew. He wrote two novels, *Yehial Hahagri* and *Ad Mashber*. Among his translations are Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *King John*, Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, for which he received the Tchernichovsky Prize. His works of criticism are *Araiy Vekeva* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1942) and *Modern Hebrew Literature: Trends and Values* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1950).

Poetic works: *Beyamim Shishah Velaylot Sheva* (1929), *Baruch Ben Neriah* (1934), *Al Ha'iy* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1946).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Al Ha'iy* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1946).

Bat-Miriam, Yocheved (1901 ——)
Born in Russia to a Hassidic family, she received a modern education in Russian and Hebrew. She began to publish in Hebrew journals by 1923. In 1929 she settled in Palestine where she taught and was active in literary circles.

Poetic works: *Mayrahok* (1932), *Eretz Yisrael* (1939), *Reayon* (1940), *Dmuyot Meofek* (1942), *Shirim Leghetto* (1943).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from A. Barash, ed., *Mivhar Hashirah Haivrit Hahadasha* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1948).

Shlonsky, Avraham (1900 ——)
Born in Russia to a family of noted Hassidic rabbis, he was sent to Palestine when he was thirteen to study at the Gymnasia Hertzelia in Tel Aviv. At the outbreak of World War I he was obliged to finish his studies in Russia. There he became a member of Hehalutz, preparing for immigration to Palestine by agricultural training. Arriving in Palestine in 1921, he was a member of the labor corps and worked on road construction and on the land in the valley of Jezrael. Subsequently, he studied comparative literature in Paris, and on returning to Palestine he became the center of the Yachdav, a literary group that was working for new forms in Hebrew poetry. In 1926 he founded *Ketuvim*, a literary weekly, and later he edited *Turim* and *Ittim*. He was literary editor of *Al Hamishmar* (a daily newspaper of the socialist left) and editor of *Sifriyat Poalim* (Workers' Book Guild). Since 1951 he has edited *Orlogin*, a literary quarterly. He was awarded the Tchernichovsky Prize. He has translated more than seventy-three books and plays, thirty of which were performed on the Hebrew stage. Consequently, his writing was a major influence on the changing contemporary idiom of the language. His translations include Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Gogol's *Revizor*, Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil* and *Quiet Flows the Don*, Moliere's *Tartuffe*, and poems of Bloch and Mayakovsky.

Poetic works: *Dvai* (1924), *Le'abba Imma* (1926), *Bagalgal* (1927), *B'eleh Hayamim* (1929), *Avnei Bohu* (1934), *Shirei Hamappolet vehapiyus* (1938), *Shirei Hayamim* (1946), *Al Milleit* (1947), and *Shirim* (2 vols.; Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1954).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim* (2 vols.; Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1954).

Shalom, S. (1904 ——)
Born in Galicia to a family of distinguished Hassidic rabbis, he fled to Vienna with his family at the outbreak of World War I. In 1922 the family went to Palestine, where he was graduated from the Teacher's College, Mizrahi, Jerusalem. He joined the founders of Kfar Hassidim and was one of the first teachers in that settlement. Later, he taught at Rosh Pinah in the upper Galilee. He studied at the University of Erlangen from 1929 to 1931. Afterward he

lived in Jerusalem until 1939, teaching Hebrew literature. He now lives in Haifa where he is an honorary citizen and is chairman of the Hebrew Writers Association. In 1941 he received the Bialik Prize. In 1951 he visited the United States. He received the Tchernichovksy Prize for the translation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets.* His volumes of short stories are *Yoman Bagalil, Aliyat Hahassidim,* and *Bemetah Hagavoah.*

Poetic works: *Belev Haolam* (1927), *Peleh Gma* (1934), *Sefer Hashirim Vehasonnetot* (1940), *On Ben Pelleh* (1942), *Panim el Panim* (1941), *Olam Belehavot* (1944), *Shabat Haolam* (1945), *Elan Bahut* (1946), *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1952).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1952).

ALTERMAN, NATAN (1910 ——)
Born in Poland, his father was a Hebrew educator who spoke Hebrew to his son. He went to Palestine in 1924 and was graduated from the Gymnasia Hertzelia in Tel Aviv. He studied agronomy at the University of Nancy, France. From 1931 he was a member of the experimental literary group Yachdav and participated in *Turim,* the weekly edited by Shlonsky. In 1944 he became known for his column of verse satire, "*Hatur Hasheviyi*" (political and social criticism), which appeared weekly in *Davar* (the moderate socialist newspaper). His serious poetry shaped spoken Hebrew, bringing to it elements of an imagist idiom which evoked the appreciation of the Israeli youth. Among his translations are Racine's *Phedre,* and Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Merry Wives of Windsor.* His two new plays, *Kinneret-Kinneret* and *Pundak Haruhot,* were performed in Tel Aviv in 1961–1963. He received the Ruppin Prize.

Poetic works: *Kohavim Bahutz* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1938), *Simhat Aniyyim* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1944), *Makot Mitzraim* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1947), *Ir Hayonah* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1957).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Kohavim Bahutz* (1938) ("Memento of Roads," "Red Ridinghood," "Beyond Melody," and "Moon"), *Simhat Aniyyim* (1944) ("The Joy of the Poor"), and *Ir Hayonah* (1957) ("The Abandoned" and "The Maid") — all published by Mahberet L'Sifrut, Tel Aviv.

GOLDBERG, LEAH (1911 ——)
Born in Lithuania, she was graduated from the Hebrew Gymnasium of Kovna and received her doctorate degree after studing philosophy and Semitic languages at the universities of Berlin and Bonn. She went to Palestine in 1935 and joined the Yachdav literary group with Shlonsky and Alterman, working with Shlonsky as translator and editor. She lectured on the history of the theater for the Habima dramatic school and was a drama and literary critic for various newspapers and journals. Her play *Mistress of the Mansion* was produced on the Hebrew stage. In 1954 she joined the faculty of the Hebrew University to lecture on comparative literature. She received the Ruppin Prize. Among her translations are Shakespeare's *As You Like It,* Ibsen's *Peer Gynt,* and Tolstoi's *War and Peace.* She collaborated with Shlonsky on an anthology of Russian poetry, and made translations from Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Verlaine, and Petrarch. She has also written poems and short stories for children.

Poetic works: *Tabaot Ashan* (1935), *Mihtav Minsiah Medumah* (1937), *Shibolet Yerokat Haayin* (1940), *Mibeti Hayashan* (1942), *Al Hapriha* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1948), *Barak Baboker* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1955).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Al Hapriha* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1948).

GILBOA, AMIR (1917 ——)
Born in Russia, he was graduated from a Hebrew gymnasium and prepared to go to Palestine by taking agricultural training with Hehalutz. He went to Palestine in 1937 and worked in quarries, at road building, and in agricultural settlements. Since 1941 he has lived in Tel Aviv. In 1942 he served in the British Army, and in 1948 he fought in the Israeli Army. Since the War he has worked in a publishing house. In 1961 he received the Shlonsky Prize for poetry.

Poetic works: *Laot* (Tel Aviv, 1942), *Sheva Reshuiot* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1949), *Shirim Baboker, Baboker* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1953).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirim Baboker, Baboker* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1953).

ROKEAH, DAVID (1916 ——)
Born in Poland, he completed his university studies in electrical engineering there. He now lives in Tel Aviv although his work often takes him to Europe. He has visited almost all the countries

of Western Europe, and translations of his poetry have appeared in European and American journals. A bilingual edition of his poems published by Surkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, appeared in September, 1963.

Poetic works: *Begesher Hayeud* (Tel Aviv, 1939), *Yamim Ashenim* (Jerusalem, 1941), *Moadey Erga* (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Sifre Tarshish, 1954), *Arar Aley Shaham* (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Shpitzer, 1958).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Moadey Erga* ("Zealots of Yearning," "Whirlwind," "Hands Full of Sun," and "Solar Years") and *Arar Aley Shaham* ("Negev," "Jerusalem," and "Open-Eyed Angel").

GURI, HAYYIM (1921 ——)
Born in Tel Aviv, he was graduated from Bet Hinuh and the Caduri School of Agriculture. In 1947 he was sent to Central Europe on a mission by the Haganah; in 1948 he served as a captain in the Palmach (commando unit) of the Israeli Army. After the War he studied Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University, and in 1953 he attended the Sorbonne in Paris. He lives in Jerusalem where he works as a journalist. In 1958 he was sent to France and Algeria, and in 1962 to France and England. He has translated French plays for the Hebrew stage.

Poetic works: *Pirhey Esh* (Tel Aviv, 1949), *Ad Alot Hashahar* (Tel Aviv, 1959), *Shirey Hotam* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1953), *Shoshanat Haruhot* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1961).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Shirey Hotam* (1953) ("The Silent Words" and "Requiescat") and *Shoshanat Haruhot* (1961) ("His Mother," "Pictures of the Jews," "Odysseus," and "Piyyut for Rosh Hashana"), both published by Hakibbutz Hameuhad, Tel Aviv.

AMIHAI, YEHUDA (1924 ——)
Born in Wurzburg, Germany, he went to Palestine in 1936 and was graduated from Bet Sefer Maaleh in Jerusalem. From 1942 to 1946 he served in the British Army, and in 1954 in the Palmach of the Israeli Army. After the War he completed his studies at the Hebrew University and now lives in Jerusalem where he teaches Hebrew literature and Bible in the secondary schools. He received the Shlonsky Prize for poetry. The Schocken Press has published his short stories and brought out his first novel in 1963.

Poetic works: *Achshav Ubeyamim H'aherim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1955) and *Bemerhak Shtay Tikvot* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1958).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Bemerhak Shtay Tikvot* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1958).

HUSS, AVRAHAM (1924 ——)
Born in Poland, he went to Israel in 1932, attended school in Jerusalem, and received a M.Sc. in physics from the Hebrew University. He fought in the Israeli Army in 1948. After the War he did graduate studies at Imperial College, London, and received a Ph.D. in meteorology at the Hebrew University. His poetry and critical reviews appeared in literary journals in Israel. Translations of his poetry have appeared in American and European journals. In 1959 he was research associate at the University of California and is now a lecturer in meteorology at the Hebrew University.

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Molad*, 1951.

GALAI, BENYAMIN (1921 ——)
Born in Russia, he went to Israel in 1928 and was graduated from the Gymnasia Hertzelia in Tel Aviv. During World War II he served in the British Air Force in North Africa, and in 1948 with the Israeli Army. He works as a public-relations consultant for the municipality of Haifa.

Poetic works: *Im Haruah* (1946), *Armonim* (1950), *Shivah Shelishit* (1954), *Al Hof Harahamim* (1958).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Dor Baaretz, antologiah shel sifrut Yisraelit* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1958).

RIVNER, TUVIA (1924 ——)
Born in Czechoslovakia, he went to Israel as a child and completed his schooling there. He fought in the Israeli Army in 1948. He was with his wife when she was killed while riding in a bus that was ambushed. He has remarried and now lives with his family in Kibbutz Merhaviah, where he is a teacher and a librarian. He has published critical reviews as well as poetry.

Poetic works: *Haesh Asher Baeven* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1959) and *Shirim Limtzo Et* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1961).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Haesh Asher Baeven* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1959).

Hillel, Omer [Omer, Hillel] (1926 ——)
Born in Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, he finished his secondary education there. During the War in 1948 he served in the Palmach of the Israeli Army. After the War he studied for two years at the Ecole Nationale d'Horticulture, Versailles. He lives in Tel Aviv, where he is a landscape architect.

Poetic works: *Eretz Tzaharayim* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1950) and *Eretz Tzaharayim* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1957).

The poem translated in this volume was taken from *Eretz Tzaharayim* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1957).

Carmi, T. (1925 ——)
Born in New York City, the son of a Hebrew teacher, he lived in Palestine from 1931 to 1934. After graduating from Yeshivah University in New York, he did postgraduate work at Columbia University and later at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1946 he worked in France, in the orphanages for refugee children. He settled in Israel in 1947 and was in the Air Force during the War for Independence. He works as a translator and editor. His translations of contemporary dramas by Bertold Brecht, Christopher Fry, Edward Albee, Brendan Behan, and John Osborne have appeared on the Israeli stage. He has also translated from the poetry of Wallace Stevens. He received the Shlonsky Prize for poetry.

Poetic works: *Moum v'halom* (Merhaviah: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1951), *Eyn Prahim Shehorim* (Merhaviah: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1953), *Sheleg B'yerushalayim* (Merhaviah: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1955), *Hayam Ha'ahron* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1958), *Nahash Hanehoshet* (Tel Aviv: Mahberet L'Sifrut, 1962). An English translation of his *Selected Poems* was published in 1963 (New York, St. Martin's Press; Andre Deutsch, London).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Eyn Prahim Shehorim* (Merhaviah, 1953) ("René's Songs") and *Hayam Ha'ahron* (Tel Aviv, 1958) ("She Sleeps"), both published by Mahberet L'Sifrut.

Trainin, Avner (1928 ——)
Born in Tel Aviv, he was educated in Jerusalem and received a Ph.D. in chemistry at the Hebrew University. In 1958–59 he was a research associate at Cambridge University. He is a lecturer in chemistry at the Hebrew University and has written a textbook on physical chemistry. His poetry and short stories have appeared in Hebrew journals.

Poetic works: *Ayzovay Kir* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1957).

The poems translated in this volume were taken from *Ayzovay Kir* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1957).

Mar, Yehiel (1921 ——)
Born in Poland, he came to Palestine in 1937 with Youth Aliyah. He was educated in the secondary schools of the kibbutz and was a member of Kibbutz Zeraim until 1943. In 1948 he was in the Israeli Army. Since that time he has lived in Tel Aviv.

Poetic works: *Melev Vanof* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1951), *Kavim B'maagal* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1957), *Mlo Hofnayim Ruah* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1962).

The poem translated in this volume was taken from *Mlo Hofnayim Ruah* (Merhaviah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1962).